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THE STORY OF SAM TAG

S · J · KENNERLY

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The Story of Sam Tag

AGE FROM TEN TO FIFTEEN

From 1860 to 1865

BY

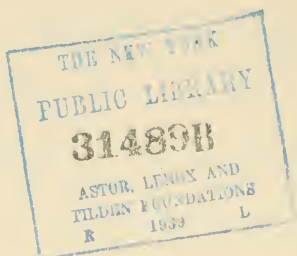
S. J. KENNERLY

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S. J. KENNERLY

TO
MY DAUGHTERS
LETA
ELIZABETH
AND
MARY DOUGLAS
THIS WORK IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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PREFACE

ON the birth-page of my mother's Bible these lines can be found: "This day a son is born to me. I hope a good and useful man he'll be. I'll teach him nothing bad, but all the good I can. My baby boy's name is Sam." When I grew up to be a good-sized boy I had a fight with another boy, and when the fight was over it took the skill of a physician to adjust the boy's toe in proper position, for I had bitten it nearly off.

For this act the negroes put an appendix to my name, calling me Sam Toe. This irritated my mother, and she threatened to give the usual thirty-nine lashes on the bare back of the next one that called me by that name.

The appendix stuck hard and fast, however, but the fear of the lash caused them to change it from Toe to Tag, and it was Sam Tag, which name I bore until I went to another State to live among strangers.

When the Civil War was ended I was scarcely in the middle of my 'teens. As I looked back over the four years of struggle I saw fortunes crumbled, fields laid waste, homes made desolate by the absence of fathers, sons, and brothers who had gone to war never to

return. I rolled up my sleeves and began to build up the wasted places on our plantation. As the years passed prosperity came slowly, and I bent my energies more and more. Then the tension snapped and I found myself a physical wreck. I fell a victim to insomnia. Through the long hours of the night I lay, trying to correct the mistakes of the day, and build greater things for the morrow. Neither brought the needful rest. It was then I thought of mother, felt her kiss on my cheek, and heard the soft crooning music of my black mammy, as she tucked me away for the night. I lived my life over again, and this brought sweet sleep with strength and health.

Herein I have chronicled my life's experience as the incidents and accidents happened. I have woven into it historical facts concerning the two great armies as they crossed and recrossed the Tennessee Valley, where this scene is laid.

Every character in this book, save one, breathed the air and drank water from the rivulets that flowed from the mountain.

If you are a business man, read it; it may save you from a like fate. If you are a woman, boy, or girl, read it; you will learn some facts which have never been recorded in history.

S. J. KENNERLY.

THE STORY OF SAM TAG

CHAPTER I

WHEN the clock struck the midnight hour, telling the world that the year 1860 had passed into history, I was just ten and a half years old—a little, hard-muscled, lithe, active, country boy, born in old Tennessee at the foot of Cumberland Mountains. To me the whole world lay in this fertile valley bounded by mountain and stream, and overhead the clear blue bowl of the sky limited my vision of what lay beyond.

Like other boys of our rural district, I was possessed of a keen activity which made me restless under restraint. I resented coercion, and every day that I could beg off from school I enjoyed "with exceeding great joy."

And so it is easy to see that, with my naturally rebellious disposition and the destruction of the schools during the war, my main source of knowledge came from field and stream, mountain and sky. Dame Nature taught a pleasant school, and I was an apt scholar and fond of my teacher. She never once punished

me for my shortcomings, but ever allowed me to follow my own fancies.

Elk River, which had its source in a mountain spring in a northern county, wound its way in a southwest direction some four miles from my home. This stream was filled with game fish that afforded fine sport for all the boys of our neighborhood. It was fordable the year round, except in extreme wet weather, which we sometimes had in the spring.

Oh, the halcyon days of youth! the joyous days I spent fishing in Elk River—a care-free, roistering youngster, barefoot, happy—and always hungry! And oh, the visions I have seen and the dreams I have dreamed as I sat on the shady bank, lazily waiting for a bite! Even now I hear the music of the wind in the trees and see again the sun-flecked shadows dimple the water, as I peer anxiously after a wary trout swimming away to hide himself in some dark retreat. From leafy coverts come the robin's gay whistle, the strident cry of the blue-jay, and in the distance the soft, cooing note of the dove. All the glad air of spring vibrates with the melody of wood-sound and wood-silence. On the sunny side of the meadow fence I hear again the lonely quail, piping his summons to his scattered covey, and the insistent note seems to call me back too, back to the good old days when I fished and fought

with the neighborhood gang, or idled alone along the banks of Elk River,

“And felt the joy
Of being a boy
Down in the leafy woods in June.”

My father's was the largest plantation in the valley. He also owned a store of general merchandise, a wagon factory, and a blacksmith shop. All around us our neighbors owned small plantations and were a happy and prosperous people, having good stock and enough slaves to till their land.

Our slaves were numerous, but the two I loved best were the plantation overseer, known to all the children as “Uncle Bill,” and “Aunt Betsy,” whose word was law to my brothers and me. In all farm affairs Uncle Bill was consulted, and, if he said, “Plant de wheat on de bottom land and de cawn and terbacker on de hill,” why, somehow, it was always planted that way. And, if he said, “Mastah, dem little niggahs growin' up mighty idlesome. Bettah put a hoe in dey han's an' put 'em in de fiel',” sure enough, every little darky, armed with a hoe, must follow Uncle Bill to the corn field to obtain a practical and, therefore, proper education.

And Aunt Betsy! Ah me! many and many

a time has she rocked me to sleep on her dusky bosom, crooning, as only an old black mammy can, the sweet old lullabyes of long ago. She it was who tied up my stubbed toes; poulticed my stonebruises; put soothing lotions on my skinned shins; and spanked me when I rebelled against the bath and clean clothes, saying, "Be still, you little rascal; Mistis say fer me to put dese clean clo's on you and I'se gwine do it," and she did. She was the housekeeper, and woe be to the other servants if shirking was even so much as suspected. She was a privileged character, and felt, and really was, superior to the other house-servants.

Uncle Bill was given an annual pass every New Year's Day, a written permit to go where he pleased without interference, a privilege that was granted only to trustworthy slaves.

The manager of the wagon factory and blacksmith shop was a white man named Milton Monke, a tall, angular fellow, said to be the counterpart of Abraham Lincoln in personal appearance. He was a man of strong personality, honest and industrious, full of droll wit and ready repartee.

Our plantation was about the center of Elk River Valley, and the store and factory attracted the people who had small business affairs to transact. It was also a meeting place for idlers and local politicians, who gathered

there to discourse learnedly on the subjects of religion and politics.

But now came rumors of war, and the discussions grew more heated, often resulting in fist fights. Of course I was generally there to see and to hear, and my heart grew faint with fear at the thought of "war and the Yankees." My father said little, but the lines of anxiety deepened in his face, and my mother grew sadder each day. The situation became more and more serious as time went by. Thus was ushered in the year 1861, and with it the dread monster War.

CHAPTER II

ABRAHAM LINCOLN had now been elected President of the United States, and the whole country, north and south, was much disturbed over the negro question. Our slaves were bitterly opposed to any interference from "dem Yankees."

"My Lawd," said Aunt Betsy, "ain't us niggers des ez free ez we wants ter be? Dem Yankees better not cum roun' heah foolin' wid Marser's niggers; dey suttently will heah from me if dey duz." And the opinion she expressed echoed the sentiments of them all.

My father was a strong Union man, and his was the only vote cast in our precinct against secession. He was growing old, and this defeat broke his heart. My mother, with the calm courage characteristic of her, took charge of our business affairs, and I was left more and more to Aunt Betsy, she being faithful to her charge.

One evening I ran down to her cabin, which was nearer the house than the other negro quarters. "Aunt Betsy," I pleaded, "please tell me a story, one all about ghosts, a real skeery one."

Aunt Betsy seemed to be just in the humor to tell grewsome tales, for she readily consented, and began:

"One time I tuk my basket en went up on de hill ter git some nice blackberries what grewed 'long back of de ole Jones place what ain't nobody lived at fer years en years. Dey an ole road runnin' 'long by it, but dey ain't nobody use it fer so long hit done grewed up in blackberry bushes. Seem lak de bigges' berries grewed right 'long dat road en in what useter be de ya'd en ga'den. I kep' gwine 'long gad-erin' berries, till las' I foun' myself right spang up ter dat ole house. De ole house done putty nigh rot down; hit pushed 'way out mighty nigh over de road. Hit wuz a-gittin' long to'rds de shank of de evenin', en I wuz skeered. De winders didn't have no glass in dem, en dey lean so fur out dey look lak ghos' eyes a-lookin' at me out de dusk. Dey wuz a cloud a-comin' up too, en seem lak dey wuz a kinder yaller light over de whole worril. I wuz so skeered dat I couldn't do nuthin' but jes stan' dar. Dat yaller light 'mind me of Miss Ann's hair—Miss Ann Allen, what lived dar wid her Uncle, Marse Felix Jones. She wuz de puttiest youn' gal, wid big blue eyes en light yaller hair all fluffy en tumbled up, en she mos' always wore white thin dresses dat look des like a mis' roun'

her. She wuz goin' ter marry, but de youn' man she wuz in love wid went down ter New Orleans ter tend ter some business en he tuk de yaller fever en died. Miss Ann, she didn't live very long atter dat. Seem lak her heart done buried in de grave wid de man, en she got thinner en thinner en whiter en whiter till she look lak a livin' ghos', en den she died. While I wuz standin' dar I heah a rumblin' in de ole house, en at de same time de lonesome cry of a whip 'o will way down on de ribber. I suttently wuz skeered, but I raised my head, en bless yo' soul, honey! right up dar in de winder wuz Miss Ann, all glowin' in de yaller light en lookin' at me wid her big eyes. I knowed she wuz dead long years 'fore you wuz born, honey, but I des couldn't he'p sayin', 'Howdy, Miss Ann!' des like I allus done when I seed her. But when I say, 'Howdy, Miss Ann,' she raise her han's en give a mou'nful kin' of cry en come a-sailin' out dat winder right down to'rds me, en I des tore out lak a wil' cat. I wuz skeered to look behind me, but I could still heah dat mou'nful soun', en I knowed she wuzn't fur off. Torectly she kotch up wid me an' she look des lak a big ball ob fi'er a-rollin' 'long side ob me. At last I got home en des fell in at de kitchen do' whar Aunt Charity wuz a-cookin'. Aunt Charity she ax

me what de matter, I act so skeered, en when I kin git my bref I tol' 'bout seein' Miss Ann Allen's ghos'. En you know what dat nigger done? She laff, honey, en say dat dey wuz no ghos', des a ole owl flewed out de winder of dat ole house, en de ball of fire wuz nuthin' but a Jack-o'-Lanten dat come from de groun'. But I knowed hit wuz a ghos', en hit ain't de fust one, en needer is it de last one I seed, en if I lives long I 'spects to see more of 'em. Yes, Lawd."

This story was told in the twilight of a summer evening—a twilight growing more weird as it deepened into night. I sat very close to Aunt Betsy, and felt all the delicious fear of a grewsome something clutching my back and little chills of terror played along my spine.

"Now, honey, you run 'long ter de house," said Aunt Betsy; "yo' ma 'll be lookin' fer you. What de matter? You ain't skeered, is you?" she asked, as I refused to go into the ever-deepening gloom. "Lawd bless yo' little heart, honey, Aunt Betsy 'll go wid you," and taking my hand in hers we started bravely forth. We had gone about half way when off to the right I discovered a white object which was also moving toward the house. This was too much for me, and, pulling loose from Aunt Betsy, I rushed frantically to my mother's room door,

which opened on a back porch. In the meantime Aunt Betsy had overtaken me and together we fell against the door. It burst open and we fell in a heap on the floor. I rose to my knees, looking over my shoulder, yelling "Ghost!" and there in the flood of light from the lamp appeared the laundress with a large bundle of clothes. My mother took me tenderly in her arms and soothed me. When I had grown quiet, she said, "My son, you know there are no ghosts, do you not?"

"Yes, mother, but I don't like to see white things in the dark," I replied; "and Aunt Betsy said she saw a ghost up at the old Jones place one time."

Mother turned quickly to Aunt Betsy, who had risen to her feet and stood waiting for the reprimand she knew was coming.

"Betsy, is it possible you still believe you saw a ghost?"

"Lawd, Mistis, I thought it wuz a ghos'. I knows you said it wuz a owl, en if you says it wuz a owl, den of course it warn't no ghos'. Anyhow, I wuz des a-tellin' a ole fool tale to my boy Sam, en I didn't think 'bout him gittin' skeered."

"That will do, Betsy," my mother interrupted; "take this child to his bed and stay with him till he is asleep. And remember, you must not tell him any more foolish stories."

The last thing I remember that night was Aunt Betsy singing in a low, sweet voice :

“Steal away, steal away, steal away
Home to my Father’s Kingdom.
Steal away, steal away,
En I ain’t got long to stay—heah.”

CHAPTER III

SOUTH CAROLINA passed an ordinance of secession in December, 1860, followed by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas in January and February of 1861, before Lincoln's inauguration. In April of the same year Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas joined the Confederacy, after the bombardment of Fort Sumter by the South as an act of self-defense.

But at that time I had no knowledge of the situation other than what I saw and heard in my immediate vicinity, and I was all eyes and ears to find out what it meant. The geography of our great country was a sealed book to me. I knew comparatively nothing of the people of other States, and had very confused ideas as to who were meant by "dem Yankees," as Aunt Betsy called our worthy opponents. Helped by her imagination, I had pictured them as giants in size and strength—veritable Goliaths to be subdued or slain by the Southern Davids, whose prowess she never doubted.

"Jes let dem Yankees come a-foolin' roun' heah, en I'll show 'em how one nigger wants ter be free. I jes wants ter be free nuff ter use my

han's, en if I don't scal' 'em wid bilin' water, it 'll be kaze dey is runnin' so fas' I can't ketch 'em. Can't no man or beas' stan' up agin bilin' water."

My oldest brother, Wilton, had grown up and left home before I could remember, and at this time was living in Georgia. I shall never forget the day my mother received a letter from him, saying he had joined the Southern Army and would start in a few days to Virginia to fight for the Southern cause. Mother read the letter aloud to the family, then quietly and with firm step left the room. Not a word of comment came from her, but the look on her face went to my heart, for I idolized my strong, tender mother, and knew that the news in the letter caused her deep sorrow.

Captain Ikard, the schoolmaster in our district, organized a company to go to the front, and my brother Pell and Stewart Monke, lads of seventeen, entered the service under him. The enlistment was for only one year, and hence there was no trouble in getting his quota of men. In my estimation, Captain Ikard was a great man. As he was a schoolmaster, I thought his knowledge was unlimited; and, as I had often seen him thrash the big boys in school, I thought, of course, he, single-handed, could whip any number of Yankees, but would

take the men along as company—the word company meaning to my childish mind “society.”

Everybody made it his or her business to see that Captain Ikard's company was properly equipped. They seemed to me invincible, each clad in his new suit of gray and carrying his arms as a symbol of loyalty and honor and, incidentally, to fight with, if it should really become necessary. And they were very anxious to get away for fear the war would be over before they had a chance to take a shot at the Yankees.

Our house was selected as the final starting place for a large number of the company, and at last, when the great day arrived, a large crowd gathered to see the brave boys march away to the music of fife and drum. I hung around, my heart in hot rebellion against the fate of being a little boy. I wanted a new gray uniform and a sword, and to be a soldier too. No boy ever saw a company of soldiers march away who was not filled with the martial fire and longed to join the ranks. A soldier's ambition is kindled in his heart and scenes of grandeur and glory fill his mind by day and his dreams by night. In imagination he receives the charge of the mighty enemy, whose blows descend upon him like thunderbolts, and towering above this fallen foe he sees himself bleeding from many wounds, but triumphant. How-

ever, with the fickleness and many-sided ambitions of youth, my day-dreams soon faded. I was not a Jonah's gourd, therefore could not "grow up in a night," so must content myself to wait until time should bring me to man's estate and another war should give me a chance to place my name upon the pages of history.

Just before Captain Ikard's company started, my mother called Pell to her. She drew him close to her and tenderly kissing him, said, "My son, if you should happen to see the enemy, do not shoot to kill; shoot to scare. This war is all wrong, and I would not have my boy shed the blood of his fellow man."

Milton Monke sat near and overheard my mother's remarks. He was a Mexican War Veteran, proud of his record as a soldier, and enjoyed telling many thrilling experiences he had during that war.

My mother's words brought him to his feet, fired with all a soldier's ambition for active and victorious warfare. He called his son to him and gave him this advice: "Stewart, if a Yankee appears before you, shoot him, and shoot to kill. That's the business of every man who engages in this war, it matters not on which side he may be. And another thing, as your father was the last man to lay his gun down in the Mexican War, so you must be last to lay your gun down in this war. Or, if you should

be killed, I want you to die with your face toward the enemy. Don't get shot in the back." Then, raising his hand, he exclaimed, as the tears ran down his cheeks, "Be true to our most righteous cause, my son. Be strong in battle, and may the God of Hosts be with you!"

Every nerve in my body thrilled at his words, and I ran away to hide myself and weep softly until I heard the tramp, tramp, tramp of the boys' feet as they marched away to the tune of "Dixie." Then in frantic haste I rushed down the road to say "good-by" to my soldier brother and again receive his assurance that he would soon be home again.

"A year is not long," he said, "and I'll be back in less time. Look out for the dogs, Sam. See that Uncle Bill takes good care of them, and we'll have some high old hunts when I get home. Good-by, old man." And when, my eyes cleared up so I could see, a bend in the road had brought the timber between Pell and me.

There lived on our plantation a widow, Mrs. Huxly, and her son George. Mrs. Huxly was a kind and charitable woman, willing at any time to sacrifice her work or pleasure to assist mother in her duties.

George, about the age of brother Pell, red-headed and freckled-faced, was of a morose disposition, and cared but little about the asso-

ciation of other boys. He had an intense hatred for negroes, who in turn hated him. My mother frequently had to correct Aunt Betsy for abuse of this young boy.

At the death of George's mother, which occurred just before the State of Tennessee seceded, my mother gave George a home at her house, and favored him with much motherly advice. After brother Pell's enlistment the negroes sought to drive George away, by chiding him about being a coward. I myself had no fault to find with him, for he always treated me kindly, but Aunt Betsy's hatred for him influenced me, and I joined the negroes in nagging him into enlisting, as he finally did. Mother prepared his clothes, gave him a Bible, kissed his forehead, and told him to be a good soldier, and when the war was over she hoped he would return to our house with soldier honors. And thus George departed.

He had scarcely turned the bend of the road, however, when Aunt Betsy said:

"Old Miss, dat boy is not gwine to jine our folks; he is gwine to jine de Yankees, or something worser, if dar is anything worser."

"Hush, Betsy!" said mother; "don't predict such evil. George may be the first to die for the South on the field of battle."

As Aunt Betsy strolled away she rolled the whites of her eyes around, and said:

"If he dies, de debil will not hab him, an' he is comin' right back he'e to do devilment."

George did not show up at the recruiting camp, and his whereabouts was a complete mystery. This worried Aunt Betsy, and at times preyed heavily on her mind. Subsequent events will show that Aunt Betsy, black of skin and illiterate though she was, had considerable knowledge of human nature.

CHAPTER IV

MY mother's physical strength seemed to increase with the many responsibilities she was obliged to assume. She soon found it necessary to close the store and the wagon factory and turn off the hands. Milton Monke continued to do repairing for the neighbors. I kept him company a great deal of the time, for I enjoyed talking with the old man and listening to the stories of the wonderful world outside of Elk River Valley. My teacher having gone to the war and my mother being burdened with business affairs and anxiety, I was, therefore, left to chance, Aunt Betsy and Milton Monke for instruction and information. Our library possessed neither books nor pictures that were specially interesting or pleasing to a small boy, so when I was puzzled about anything, I went to the shop to question Mr. Monke.

Yankees, Yankees, Yankees! I heard them discussed daily, but had very misty ideas concerning them. Aunt Betsy had failed to enlighten me, so one afternoon I ran down to the blacksmith shop to ask Mr. Monke about them. I found him alone, looking grave and thought-

ful. He greeted me kindly, and, as I was eager for information, I at once asked the question uppermost in my mind.

"Mr. Monke, who are the Yankees and where do they live?"

"Why," he replied, "they are a lot of measly little fellows in the North who think they can whip us and run this government. But I reckon we'll give them some trouble and keep them sort o' busy, anyhow. They say they are going to free the niggers, but I have some doubt about that, too."

"But," I persisted, "what do they look like?"

"Well, they are just little blue-bellied Yankees," he said, and then dismissed me. "Run along, son, I'm busy thinking, and don't want to be disturbed." And with that I had to be satisfied.

I went to Aunt Betsy with the strange news I had heard.

"Aunt Betsy, Mr. Monke says the Yankees are going to free the niggers. Would you leave us?"

"G'way from heah, chile, tellin' me sich tales ez dat. You knows I ain't gwine ter leave my Mistis. Can't no Yankees make me no low-down free nigger. I jes like ter see 'em try it once, dat I would! Don't all specttubble niggers 'long to folks, en ain't I specttubble?"

I immediately apologized for entertaining the idea that she would like to be free. She forgave me and we went to the henhouse to gather up the eggs. Aunt Betsy put the eggs in her apron, and then said, "Now, honey, you run ter de stable en you'll fin' some more aigs under de hoss troff," and, as I scampered off to do her bidding, I heard her say, "En dem Yankees say I ain't free! My Lawd!"

Arriving at the stables I found Uncle Bill mending harness and talking to two or three little darkies who were listening eagerly to the story of how Brer Rabbit outwitted Brer Bear. I forgot all about the eggs and sat down to listen too, just as much interested as the little negroes.

The next day was Sunday. The harness repaired and the old carriage geared up, we were off to the old schoolhouse, where the people gathered each Sunday to hear a sermon by a preacher whose privilege it was to occupy the pulpit on that day. This building was erected by my father and dedicated to all denominations. Rev. James Oakes was to preach this Sunday.

Brother Oakes was a good man and true, and everybody honored and respected him. Men, women, and little children looked to him for comfort and help, and his various flocks loved him for his counsel, but Brother Oakes had an

impediment in his speech. I've seen him oftentimes in the most ludicrous situation, his eyes closed, his mouth open, but not a word could he utter. Suddenly he would recover himself, and then spoke rapidly, intelligently, and to the point. He did not prepare written sermons, but spoke from a full heart and a well-stored mind.

When we reached the church most of the congregation were seated—the men on one side and the women on the other, the little children in the care of their mothers.

Milton Monke was there, occupying an ordinary, backless bench against the wall near the door. He seldom attended service, and everybody knew why he was there now. Brother Oakes had chosen "War" as his subject, and Monke was there to hear what he had to say about it. But alas, for good intentions! During the first prayer, in which Brother McKelvey told the Lord at length all the needs of the congregation and His duty toward the entire South withal, a wasp came through the window humming a soft lullaby, which, with the combined influence of Brother McKelvey's vocal effort and the warm, sultry atmosphere, produced a somnolent effect on Mr. Monke, and he slept—slept so soundly that he did not hear the beginning of the sermon, which was much delayed and in-

errupted by Brother Oakes' unfortunate impediment.

At last, after halting and hammering through a chapter of Holy Scripture, the reverend gentleman warmed to his subject. Intense earnestness characterized his efforts, and he became dramatic as he pictured war and its horrors. Scene after scene of bloody carnage seared my brain with a deadly fear, causing my hair to tingle at the roots and cold chills to play up and down my spine. He spoke eloquently of the dreadful instruments of war that men used to destroy each other in battle, of the torrents of blood shed, of the moans and shrieks of wounded men and horses, and the pitiful silence of the dead. And, for some reason I do not remember, he related a battle scene of long ago, in which he said "many lay dead upon the field and not one bore a mark or wound upon his body." Just as he finished the last word his jaw dropped, leaving his mouth wide open, his eyes closed, and there he stood, unable to utter a sound—a victim of the impediment in his speech. Milton Monke awoke just in time to catch Brother Oakes' startling statement. Starting quickly to his feet, half dazed with sleep, he shouted, "That's a lie! Turn them over and you'll find a Rebel bullet in every one of them." Then, suddenly realizing the occa-

sion and where he was, he fled through the door and out to the woods in shamed repentance.

Afterward, when anybody perpetrated a joke about Rebel bullets, Monke had to endure it and join in the laugh at his own expense. Brother Oakes accepted it, too, as a good joke, and so the incident passed.

CHAPTER V

Now had come the fall of '61, and none of the usual plantation festivities were omitted on account of the war: corn huskings and quilting bees were as popular as ever, and at night the young people came from far and near to dance till the wee sma' hours warned them to disperse.

The god of War reigned, but, as our neighborhood remained unmolested, our people failed to realize the seriousness of the situation. Our crops were good, our negroes obedient and industrious; as yet the roar of cannon had not reached us, nor had the smoke of battle obscured the sunlight of sweet peace, so we were happy, and hopeful that the war would soon be over and our soldier boys come home. On account of the isolated position of our valley, and the absence of newspapers, but little war news reached us, but we were confident of the ultimate victory of the Confederate Army.

One night in the early fall, while the weather was yet pleasant, the news went forth that a party or dance would be given at the Hender-

son home. Mr. Henderson was in the army, but his good-natured wife and his two beautiful and lively young daughters were ever ready to open their hospitable home to the young people. And oh, the joys of a country dance! never a train nor a pompadour, nor yet a dress suit or a Tuxedo were seen in those halls of mirth. The girls' skirts were of dancing length and the boys wore their "store clothes," and every man of them brought his good manners along as his chief asset.

Nearly all of the men, old and young, were in the army, and so the younger boys were utilized as beaux and escorts for the girls—young girls, old maids, widows and wives, God bless 'em! And all of them were there. I rode horseback, clad in my Sunday best, my hair slicked tight to my head and my ears standing out like sentinels to catch the slightest sound, for, be it known, I was yet young enough to see things in the night and to fear the lonely ride through the woods. But not for worlds would I have confessed this fear.

I was not expected to act as escort for any of the girls, so I rode gayly forth, happy in the fact that the distance was short. I reached my destination in safety and found the fun in full swing. I tied my horse to a nearby tree, hitched up my "galluses," straightened my coat collar, took off my hat, gave my hair a final

pat and was on the point of entering the house, when Tom Elkins and his sister, Miss Sallie, rode up.

"Where is your girl, Sam?" Tom asked, when he saw that I was alone.

"Miss Sallie is my girl," I replied. "I am waiting to take her in."

"Why, certainly, Sammy is my beau" (Lord, how I hated to be called "Sammy"), said Miss Sallie, "and we will dance the first set together."

Stooping slightly, she placed her hand on my arm, and proudly I escorted the charming young lady up the steps and into the great living room, from which all the furniture had been removed to make room for the dancing. There a gay scene met our eyes. In the great fireplace hickory logs roared and sputtered and blazed, shedding a glow throughout the room that was not materially enhanced by the lamps that hung around the wall. Everybody seemed to be talking at once, and good-natured laughter was heard on every hand. Suddenly, above the uproar, rang out the voice of Uncle Steve, the neighborhood fiddler:

"Choose yer partners fer de fust quadrille."

Soon two sets were formed, each boy clinging to the hand of his fair partner, as if afraid she might try to escape. Miss Sallie kept her promise, and I stood holding her hand and wishing I was as tall as Arch Woods, who was

but little older than myself, but tall for his age.

Uncle Steve tucked his fiddle under his chin, drew the bow across the string in a long drawn preliminary squeak, and then fell into a rollicking tune that set all of one's dancing blood in motion. All over the room was heard the rhythmic patting of feet and clapping of hands, keeping time with the music. And as we danced Uncle Steve called the figures:

"Hon'ah yo' pa'tners; ladies on de lef'. All han's aroun', an' circle to de right. Swing yo' pa'tners an' all promenade."

And around we whirled, dancing to the right to our places.

"Fust fo' couples fo'd, an' back."

Uncle Steve had never learned that four people were not four couples. But nothing daunted, we continued to dance; and how the boys did cut the pigeon wing and knock the back step. Oh, but it was an inspiring scene. A half hour of good hard dancing brought the first quadrille to a close, and after a few moments' rest Uncle Steve announced the "Ferginy reel."

The lines were formed. Uncle Steve was tuning his fiddle with a plink, plink, plonk, plonk, with an intervening flourish of the bow, when a negro boy came in bringing a note from his mistress to Tom Elkins, requesting him to

go to Deckard after Dr. Farris to attend a sick child.

"As you have to pass the house anyway, I will go on home with you, Tom," said Miss Sallie.

"No, no, and no, no," was heard from every part of the room. We were sorry to have Tom go, but Miss Sallie must not and should not go. I stepped forward, and with Napoleonic courage announced that I would be pleased to accompany Miss Sallie home.

Tom took his departure and the dancing continued till one o'clock, when everybody prepared to go home. I mounted my horse, and rode up to the block, where Miss Sallie was standing waiting for me. When she was comfortably seated behind me we rode gayly forth into the darkness. The deep gloom of waning night fell upon us like a pall, and all at once there came to my mind the thought, "We must pass Penile Hill." I was filled with dismay when I remembered grewsome tales I'd heard the negroes tell of this fateful place. There was an old well on the side of the hill just above the road. The negroes said this well had no bottom, and was the direct road to— Well, not the place where good negroes go. They told of ghostly forms, hair-raising scenes, groans and rattling bones, the touch of icy fingers, the muffled sound of phantom footsteps,

and other conditions supposed to exist in "haunted" localities. They told how these restless, unhappy ghosts chased all hapless mortals who were unfortunate enough to have to pass the well after midnight. Horses' legs were often cut; from the roadside shadowy forms would spring on the horse, in front of the rider, dash madly down the road for a quarter of a mile, and suddenly disappear.

I had dropped rocks in the well in daytime, but haunted wells after midnight thrilled me with untold terror. I tried to talk in a natural tone, but my tongue was stiff, and sound surged in my ears like the roar of mighty machinery, while my boyish heart ached with a nameless dread. Finally, I managed to blurt out, "Miss Sallie, we are nearly to Penile Hill. Do you reckon we will see a ghost up there to-night?"

I tried to speak flippantly, but my voice faltered in spite of my effort, and, besides, I was not reassured by Miss Sallie's answer.

"Sam," she said, "never mind what you see. When you get in sight of that old well, lay whip to the horse and run; I'll shut my eyes and hold tight," and I felt her hands tremble as they clasped me closer. She was young herself—not quite eighteen, so I suppose she was excusable for being afraid of the dark, and—and—ghosts.

We rode along quietly until we reached the

foot of the hill, when I began to urge my horse into a faster gait. Surefootedly and swiftly he climbed the hill until we were almost opposite the well, when suddenly he stopped. I had kept my eyes shut, but now was obliged to open them to find what the trouble was, my soul filled with frantic fear. I peered through the darkness, and there, in the middle of the road, stood an object. Big! Far bigger than I had dreamed that ghosts could be, and almost instantly another "ghost," but quite a small one, appeared. They seemed to stand quite still for a moment, and then moved slowly away toward the well. Not a word had we spoken, but I knew Miss Sallie was aware of the apparitions that had frightened my horse and me.

I was afraid to look for the ghosts, but the thought occurred to me that they were waiting somewhere to spring upon us as we passed; that their going toward the well was only a ruse to throw us off our guard.

With courage deserving a more worthy cause I determined to outwit them. I closed my eyes and laid whip to my horse, and the next thing I remembered we were at the Elkins place, more than a mile from the well. The Elkinses kindly invited me to stay the rest of the night, and I was delighted to do so. No lonely ride for me that night.

Some months later I related the foregoing

circumstances in the presence of Gib Jackson, a happy-go-lucky fellow, who lived on the other side of Penile Hill. He spoiled my ghost story, of course, by saying that the objects we saw were himself and his dog. He had been hunting and was on his way home when he saw us coming. He supposed we were returning from the Henderson party and he merely stopped to see if he knew who we were. He described our movements so accurately that I was convinced of the truthfulness of his statements, and so vanished another myth.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTMAS came and with it the hilarity expected upon the occasion. Mother had her usual Christmas dinner, and the neighbor women and children gathered to partake of her bounty. After dinner the negroes fiddled and danced the Highland fling until feeding time.

Our soldier boys should have been home ere this time, but as yet they had not been in a single battle. For my part, I wondered why they did not go ahead and whip the Yankees and come on home—never dreaming there could be any other result.

All of our war news came through Milton Monke. His sudden “disappearances and reappearances” were first noticed by the negroes, who believed he was possessed of supernatural powers—“a sperit,” as they said. His reports were always in favor of our side—how Lee and Jackson were making Virginia hot for the invaders, and so on.

When questioned as to how he got his information, Monke said that away up on the mountainside he talked to the grapevines, and

they sent his messages and brought back the answers. Ever after he was known as "Grapevine Monke."

The first important news that Grapevine Monke brought us was that the Battle of Fort Donelson had been fought and that Captain Ikard's company made it hot for the Yankees; at that point his "grapevines" failed him and he could get no further report, but feared the worst.

Three days later came the official report, and there was deep sorrow in Elk River Valley. Some of our boys had been killed, some had been wounded, and the rest, save one, Stewart Monke, had been captured.

Great excitement prevailed, and the women were almost insane from suspense. Days passed and still there was no news. At last a letter from my brother Pell came, telling my mother that he and some chums were well and had something to eat, for which they were thankful, even if they were in prison. I well remember one little anecdote his letter contained. He said that on their arrival at Indianapolis many women and children turned out to see the Rebel prisoners. Near him stood a lady and her little boy. The little fellow gazed intently at him for a moment, then, pointing at him with his pudgy finger, exclaimed: "Mother, that boy looks like Kate Tobin's brother. Come on,

now, let's go see some sure 'nough rebels, the ones with horns." So, you see, my dear reader, I was not the only deluded small boy in that unsettled time.

Not long after Pell's letter my mother received one from a Sister of Charity, saying that Pell was seriously ill. Mother made speedy preparations and started to see him, but for some reason, I don't remember what, she was turned back. Next day another letter came, saying that the doctor had just left Pell's bedside, and that there was no hope, he could last but a few hours longer.

All that night my mother kept watch by the dim light of a tallow candle—kept watch in dry-eyed, shuddering silence, thinking of her dying boy in that far-away prison. Truly, "every heart knoweth its own bitterness," and there can be no deeper sorrow than that felt by the mothers, North and South, who kept watch all through the night of that cruel war.

However, Pell did not die. The good Sister of Charity, sister of love and kindness, wrote again, telling mother that Pell fell into a deep sleep, and on waking was much refreshed, and a great deal better. My boyish heart rejoiced to see the light in my mother's face.

One day Grapevine Monke came home after several days' absence and told us that the Confederate soldiers were retreating out of Ten-

nessee. "Not that they were whipped, oh, no! They were just preparing to get a better hold." He also advised us to keep a sharp lookout toward the north, as now there was nothing between us and the Yankees, and they were liable to swoop down upon us at any time.

This news greatly troubled the lonely women. Mother decided to send Uncle Bill, the negro overseer, with our mules, wagons, and negroes South, with instructions to stay within Southern lines. In a few days the long wagon train, guided by Uncle Bill, disappeared on the southern horizon—and now we were desolate indeed.

Said Aunt Betsy, "I ain't gwine souf, no'f, eas' ner wes' less'en my Mistis goes. Whar she goes I goes; whar she stays I stays," and that was settled. Grave responsibilities now rested upon me. I must help take care of the family. My first venture was going to mill. With Aunt Betsy's help I yoked Tom and Jerry, the muley steers, and put the corn sacks in the wagon. Aunt Betsy prepared food enough for my supper and breakfast and put a quilt in the wagon for me to sleep on, as it was eight miles to the mill, and I could not make the trip in one day with a slow ox team.

Mother called me in and said I was her brave little man, and I must be careful and not get hurt.

"You stay in the wagon, Sam," she said, "and the oxen will stay in the road and bring you safely to the mill."

When mother went into the house Aunt Betsy put her hand on my shoulder and said, "Honey, ef dem steers hist dey haids and sta'ts fer de water, you git out'n dat wagon, an' git out quick, fer de ain' no 'pendence to be put in muley steers."

And so, seated upon the cornsacks, whip in hand, I started bravely forth to take my grist to the mill. I kept my seat for a while, but soon left it to throw rocks at the field larks on the old rail fence and watch the young squirrels scamper off at my approach, and do all the other things a healthy country boy finds to do. When tired of walking I would climb into the wagon, from the back, and stretch out on the sacks in the early spring sunshine.

The morning passed, and the afternoon, and the sun was traveling rapidly toward the western horizon when I came in sight of the mill. I was congratulating myself on my good luck, when suddenly the steers "histed" their heads and made a dash for the river; down the hill and through the woods they went, a runaway pair and a hapless boy, too scared to act on Aunt Betsy's advice. I did not need to, however, for a wheel struck a stump, the wagon was overturned and I was spilled out along with

the cornsacks. Fortunately I was thrown so far no harm was done to me. The miller came to my rescue and we soon had the oxen tied to a tree and the corn in the mill. I was gratified to find two of my boy friends there, as I had to remain overnight. The miller showed us where to spread our pallets, and that night we slept in the mill—much to our enjoyment.

Next morning we played along the river bank waiting to be called when our grinding was done. The mill was run by water—the old type mill with overshot water-wheel. The river was pretty high and pouring over the dam at a fearful rate.

About three hundred yards above the dam a canoe was locked to a tree by a long chain. When we discovered this canoe we conceived a great plan. Catching the chain, we pulled it close to the bank and one of my companions climbed in; then we gave it a hard shove and out into the river it went; we then pulled it in by the chain. Our companion then got out and I got in; seating myself in the far end, I cried "Shove her out hard, boys," and they did. The chain broke, the boat shot out to near the middle of the river and then turned downstream, headed for the dam. I was a good swimmer, so I sprang into the water and made for the bank. The current was very swift, and I soon discovered that I was going downstream rap-

idly and nearing the bank slowly. I was getting tired, but kept struggling against the current. I saw that I would miss the dam, but was going straight toward the water-wheel. I could hear the miller shouting something to me, but I could not understand what he said. The roar of the water was something fearful to hear, and I had almost lost hope when suddenly down went the floodgate and I drifted against a post. There I clung like a half-drowned rat till a rope was thrown to me and I was dragged out.

The few garments I wore were soon dry, and in a short time I was the same old tough boy again. The canoe went over the dam into the whirlpool below, and there dived and plunged until the ever-changing current had dashed it to pieces against the rocks. The boys chaffed me a good deal and said I was scared, which was true, though I denied it and assured them that I was not in the least frightened, merely wet and uncomfortable. Being boys, did they believe me?

It was past the middle of the afternoon when the miller told me to yoke up the muleys. I was terrified at the thought of starting home so late, for I knew that night would soon overtake me, and I dreaded the lonely eight miles. But I would not admit it—not under any circumstances.

The oxen had had plenty of grass and water, so I brought them in and put the yoke on them. The miller had already put the meal in the wagon, so I had only to hitch the oxen and start on my lonely way. And how lonely it was! The sun was just going down and the shadows deepened, as the rapid twilight enveloped the woods. A pale young moon, scarcely to be seen through the trees, cast a sickly glow over the dim road that stretched before me. It was soon gone, and darkness covered the earth. The silence was broken at frequent intervals by the hoot of an owl, or the lonesome cry of a whippoorwill, and once a screech owl "laughed" so near to me I almost fell off the wagon. How I hated that old miller for starting me home at night! I heartily wished his old mill would burn down. While in the midst of these vindictive reflections I straightened the meal sacks out in line, rolled my quilt around me and lay down. I was mad at that old miller, and thought of many mean things that could happen to him, when suddenly a tardy conscience bade me remember that that mean old miller was the same man that shut down the floodgate and saved my life that very day. And I hadn't so much as thanked him. Well, I felt pretty mean as I lay there looking up at the stars and listening to the deep breathing of the oxen and many sounds that disturbed

the silence of the night. And scared! Fear fairly oozed from the pores of my skin. I do not know why I was scared, but I was badly frightened, although I knew that the oxen would take me straight home if once they were headed that way. But neither fright nor conscience could keep me awake very long. By and by I pulled the quilt over my head and when I came to myself again the wagon was still.

I was afraid to stick my head out to see where I was, so I kept quiet and listened intently. Presently I heard a rooster crow, and so knew I was near a house. This gave me courage enough to raise my head and look around, and, to my great joy I found myself at home. The dawn was just breaking over the eastern horizon, and in the early light the old place looked mighty good to me. And brave! My! my courage knew no bounds as I looked into the kitchen where Aunt Betsy was making a fire to cook breakfast.

"Lan' sakes, chile, whar you come fum? Yo' ma done been pesterin' all night 'bout you."

"I just got home from the mill, Aunt Betsy," I said. "You'll have to help me bring in the meal sacks."

"Jes' home from the mill! You didn' come by yo'sef!" and she looked at me so incredulously that I felt that I had, indeed, been brave.

“Oh, yes,” I answered, “why not?” And I never told that I had slept most of the way home; neither did I make mention of the fear in my heart—fear of “boogers” and things a small boy is apt to see in the woods at night.

CHAPTER VII

I HAD spent much of my time since the war began fishing and hunting. I owned four as good hounds as ever barked on the trail. Fiddle and Rule were close rangers, while Nim and Driver seemed to use human intelligence, and circled far away. If a coon or 'possum ever made a track within the range of either of these dogs, they were sure to catch the scent, and after notifying the others the fun began, and to this day the yelping of hounds on a hot trail is sweet music to my ears.

One dark night when the wind was whistling through the tree-tops, I sat before a huge log fire gazing intently at the varying pictures that my imaginative mind saw in the changing scenes in the flames. I could see the fox and the hounds, the woods and the fields, the cunningness of the fox and the intelligence of the hounds, but it was now only in the pictures, for the real pleasure had been taken away from me.

Uncle Bill was gone, and without him I was afraid to stick my nose out of the house after nightfall. It was a blustery night. Mother sat by the small center-table patching my trousers by the light of a tallow candle. Aunt Betsy had gone to her cabin, which stood about a hundred feet from the house.

A feeling of depression began to creep over me, and a big tear trickled down my cheek. My mother noticed me wipe this away with my hand, but I choked back the others and started to tell her of my last fox chases with Uncle Bill, when a rap was heard on the back door of our house. My mother asked me to open the door, which I would have readily done if it had been a starlight night, for our neighbors often paid their visits at such times, but the howling of the wind and my despondent mood made me hesitate.

She laid her work on the table and opened wide the door. There stood a small copper-colored negro man about fifty years old, with a bundle under his arm. When he raised his hat and made a low bow we saw that his hair had turned gray, but his voice was soft and musical as he said: "Mistis, this nigga am powerful hongry, and like as not you would like to hear me play a chune," and he began to untie the bundle, when mother asked him to have a seat at the foot of the stairway. From the casing he pulled out an old fiddle that had evidently been in use many years. He spit on the keys and twisted them and thumbed the strings for some minutes; then he drew the bow across the strings and played "Dixie." When he had finished he laid down the bow and dropped his head in his hands, crying like a

child. My mother asked him where he had come from, where he was going, and why he was traveling around on such a blustery night. And this is the story he told:

"I'se Houstin Tarrant. I belongs to old Mistis and Marse Bob and Marse Ned, and lives in Kentucky. Marse Bob and Marse Ned fuss 'bout de war, and Marse Bob went with our folks and Marse Ned went with the Yankees, and old Mistis, she cry so much she done died, and I'se huntin' Marse Bob. I took my old fiddle along, for I know de white folks want to hear me play "Dixie."

By the time he had told his story he seemed to forget his troubles, and began to twist the keys again, and played "Cotton-Eyed Joe," a familiar tune in that day. This brought Aunt Betsy from the cabin, and, unceremoniously opening the door, she saw the little negro with his fiddle, and before any explanation could be made, she turned on him with all the wrath she could summon and said, "Look heah, niggah, you git right out'n this house, or I'll bust you wide open," and she started to take hold of him when my mother interfered and told her to take him to the kitchen and give him something to eat and a bed for the night.

I was infatuated with the little negro, and as I lay in bed that night I wondered if he liked to coon hunt. I planned to show him my dogs

and tell him how fast they could run, but then Aunt Betsy was mad at him, so I was sure that he would leave the next day. With these thoughts I fell asleep, but was up early next morning, puzzling my brain how to get Aunt Betsy in a good humor. I had to say something, so I looked her in the eye and asked:

"Aunt Betsy, don't you think that little nigger's pretty?"

She stopped her work, straightened herself up and said, "Honey, did dat niggah tell you to ax me dat? If he did, you ain't gwine to git me to say it, for dar ain't no pretty niggahs."

"Well, don't you like him?"

"You axin me too many questions; I don't want noffin to do wid po' white trash niggahs."

The manner in which she spoke made me feel more comfortable about his staying. He made no effort to go further south, and in two short months there was a wedding at our house with Uncle Huse—I had now gotten well enough acquainted to call him Uncle—and Aunt Betsy as the contracting parties.

We had heard nothing from either army since Grapevine Monke told us to keep our eyes skinned to the north because there were no Confederates between us and the Yankees.

The little copper-colored negro was a boon companion of mine, and was equally as fond of hunting and fishing as myself. He kept plenty

of wood chopped, fed the horses, milked the cows and was very attentive to "old Miss," my mother.

One night there was stolen from our stable "Dollar Hide," a very fine horse, and a note was left tacked over the door that read like this:

"He who follows me to get this horse had better first dig his own grave."

Horse stealing was a new profession in that part of the country, and the incident caused a great deal of talk. It was said that there was not a white nor black man in our neighborhood low and disreputable enough to steal a horse unless it was some stranger, and as our little negro was the only stranger many believed it was he, and this feeling began to grow until Aunt Betsy changed the tide.

One morning she came into my mother's room very much excited and said she had been to heaven and the good Lord told her who stole Dollar Hide. This was not the first time Aunt Betsy had been to heaven, and mother paid but little attention to her and only told her to hurry up breakfast, and that she had been dreaming. But the old negro, thinking more of her vision than of breakfast, said:

"Old Miss, didn't I allers tell you dat po' white trash of a boy, George Huxly, ain't fightin' Yankees? He is de one what took

Dollar Hide, for de Laud told me so, and I see'd dat boy's sperit, and it's around dis house now, for he sho' is stealin' horses and not fight-in' Yankees."

"Oh! hush, Betsy, and go get breakfast," said my mother.

On former occasions the old darky was content to tell what she saw and whom she talked to on her trip to heaven, but this time it took several days to get it out of her head that the spirit of George Huxly was not hovering around the house.

The meal was now getting low, and mother told me I would have to make another trip to the mill, and that I had better drive up the muley steers from the pasture. Since my last trip to the mill I had learned to ride races and had won all the barlows and marbles from the other boys, so I had to look up a new field. I told mother that there was a better and quicker way to go to mill, which was to put the sacks of corn on Roggins' back and I would straddle the sacks; and besides there was a mill on Elk River which made finer meal, and I had better go there. My real object, however, in going to this mill was to get where Roggins' record as a racer was not known. My mother gave her consent and early the next morning Uncle Huse helped me to get off. The mill was on the opposite side of the river just a mile upstream

from the ford, and the ford just four miles from our house. The road along the opposite bank of this river was as straight as an arrow, and large trees grew on both sides, and their overlapping branches made a beautiful race-course. To ford the river I had to go in a few feet, and then upstream a few hundred feet, then across to the other bank and down to a spot opposite to where I had entered the water and then out up the embankment. To go straight across meant to get into swimming water. Just why such places were selected I do not know, but all crossings on Elk River were that way.

I had scarcely gotten to the top of the bank when I heard the clatter of horses' feet and I knew there was a race on. Then I saw Arch Woods and Will Featherston seated on horses, one on each side of the road, to act as judges. Roggins was prancing and champing the bit while I took my place beside Arch that I might be my own judge as to the winner. The race was soon over, and as we rode on to the mill Arch asked:

"Can that old bay plug run?"

"A little," I answered.

"Are you willing to put up on your judgment?" said he.

"Yes, I'll put up a knife or two," I replied.

"Well," said Arch, "you'll get a bet up at the mill, and they've got some fast ones."

"Well, if they outrun Roggins they've got a huckleberry," I returned.

By this time we were at the mill, and I turned my sacks over to the man and asked when my turn would come.

"Not until to-morrow morning at nine o'clock or thereabouts," he replied.

This remark was satisfactory to me, as I wanted an excuse to come back, for I did not believe I would get a chance to win all their knives that day. The boys were all gathered around Roggins, examining her legs and the shape of her body, taking note of all of her good and bad points; at least they thought they were. Some said she could run, and others said she could not. When it seemed to me that each one had spent his last opinion on her running qualities, one more bold than the rest said:

"I'll put up my knife on old Slab Sides against your horse, without waiting to see Slab Sides."

Out came my knife, and then both were in the hands of a stakeholder. Another knife was at once put on Slab Sides and one on Roggins, and so on until my last knife was up. Then I bet my fancy buttons, and that bet was accepted. So sure was I that Roggins could win that I bet my "galluses," and now all that I possessed was up on this race except my shirt and trousers.

Old Slab Sides was led out and I noted that she looked the name—long, slim body, slim legs, and sleepy-looking. The rider, comfortably seated on her back, drew up the reins and we started toward the big road.

Both horses seemed to understand what was coming, and began to prance sideways. At the starting-place we had but little trouble getting an even break, the difference, if any, being in favor of Roggins. I leaned forward and touched Roggins in the flanks, and when the first quarter was past I was a full length ahead; at the second quarter about a half length ahead. I now felt sure of winning and allowed Slab Sides to move up, neck and neck. At the third quarter I touched Roggins slightly with my whip, but, to my astonishment, Slab Sides was moving past me and I could not gain on her. She seemed to straighten herself out and fairly fly.

The race was soon over and I lost, and I was now a bankrupt. I was considerably chagrined, but Slab Sides had won fairly and the stakeholder turned over the bets. After Roggins had rested I started home, but told the boys I would be back again and would run another race, and so I did, but the reader will find in the next chapter that it was under different circumstances and did not require a pocket knife to get me into the race.

CHAPTER VIII

I DID not go back to the mill the next day, as I had planned, for I had not the necessary articles to insure me a race. But the day following I was up and on the road bright and early. Roggins seemed to feel better and traveled with more ease, and I felt that I would not only win back what I had lost, but much more besides.

On arriving at the mill I found the place deserted save for the old miller, and he was in a state of excitement and urged me to get my sack quickly and get away, for the woods were full of Yankees, not many miles away. Fear seized me, and scarcely taking time to get my meal, I turned Roggins' head toward the level road, where I met the stuttering preacher, Oakes.

"You had better move at a two-forty rate, Sam," he yelled, "for the Yankees are coming, and are taking all the horses and freeing the negroes."

Just then a cloud of dust could be seen north of us, and he pointed to it and said, "Yankees they——" Then his tongue became twisted, and if ever he finished that sentence I was not there to hear it. Forgetting the preacher, I al-

most flew down that road, over which I had run the race and lost all my belongings only two days before. Now I was running against time to get away from the terrifying Yankees, for I knew not how they looked nor what they would do with me.

Into the river I rushed in a gallop, and in my excitement I forgot to cross in the usual way and headed straight for the opposite bank. I soon found myself in swimming water, and as the meal sack was giving me some trouble I let it go into the river and bade it farewell.

When I reached the bank I leaned forward on Roggins' withers and urged her on faster and faster. For four miles, uphill and down, the mare held a steady gallop, and when I drew up at our front gate she was covered with foam, and sweat was dripping from her nose, neck, and legs. Aunt Betsy met me at the gate and exclaimed, "What you running Roggins so fer? You knows better 'an dat; now I'se gwine to whip you, fer you sho' am needin' it."

Her beating, however, only amounted to an affectionate tap with her soft black hand, so I paid little heed, but took the reins from Roggins' head and beckoned to Aunt Betsy. She immediately changed the tone of her voice and said, "Now honey, you gwine to tell me the truth?"

"Yes, Aunt Betsy; the Yankees are at the mill and coming this way!" I cried excitedly.

"You shorely don't mean dat!" exclaimed Aunt Betsy.

"Yes I do," I replied.

"Who done tole you?" she insisted.

"Mr. Oakes told me they were coming and freeing all the negroes and taking the horses," I responded.

I raced off to tell my mother, with Aunt Betsy mumbling at my heels. As soon as mother heard the news, she had Aunt Betsy to dig a big hole at the back of the garden, in which was put a tin box that contained a large roll of money and silverware, then covered it over neatly and put a flat rock over the place. I got my shotgun, which had been given to me at Christmas time, and took it to Aunt Betsy's cabin, where I found Uncle Huse. I told him of the approaching Yankees and tried to get him to hide my gun.

"Bless you, honey," he said, "de Yankees won't get yo' gun, for Marse Ned's wid 'em and I'se only ter tole him, for I wants ter kotch him and Marse Bob togedder."

I left my gun and ran back to the house, where I found mother sitting in a large chair on the piazza. I took my seat on the front steps to get my first glimpse of the Yankees. I had not long to wait, for not far distant there came

into view a body of horsemen arrayed in beautiful blue uniforms, with their swords dangling by their sides and their guns glistening in the evening sunshine. This was the front column of General Buell's army, marching south. I was thrilled with excitement, for it was a far grander sight than my young mind had ever dreamed of. I wished that I might be a man with a gun and a sword and could ride a beautiful horse like one of these.

Then I turned to look at mother, and oh, what a change! Her face was pale, her lips white, and her hands trembling as she rolled and unrolled the corners of her apron. This changed my enthusiasm to that of fear, and I too was trembling as I turned and beheld the cavalry entering the big driveway leading up to the house. On they came in a sweeping gallop, and I thought they were going to run over our low yard fence and into the house.

"Halt!" I heard one call.

They all quickly jumped from their horses and came straight to the house. "There comes Uncle Houston's Marse Ned," I said to myself, as a tall man stepped up on the porch. He strode past us and neither spoke nor saluted my mother, but went into the house and with one stroke of the butt end of his gun cleared the mantle.

Our old clock, that had clicked off the hours

for more than a quarter of a century, lay in fragments on the floor. With his bayonet he pierced my brother Wilton's picture that hung over the mantle, and tore it from the wall. The house was now full of soldiers, jabbering in a language I could not understand. Everything was in utter confusion, every piece of furniture was being demolished. I heard the sideboard crash and the dishes rattle upon the floor; the feather beds were ripped open, and the feathers flew in every direction. I saw mother's picture fall to the floor, and a soldier attempting to stamp it with his foot. I caught it with my hands and looked up just in time to see him with his gun raised, as if he were going to pierce me through with his bayonet. Just then a handsome fellow with shoulder straps struck him and said, "Get out of here, and catch up with your company. What the hell does all this mean!" These were the only words spoken that I could understand.

The room was soon cleared, but only for a short space of time, for another squad had filled it again, and were smashing things that the others had left unnoticed. Not until now had I taken one thought of mother. I had not seen her since I left her on the porch. I ran through all the rooms on the lower floor, then pushed my way up the stairs; not finding her

there I ran down, meeting a soldier at the landing, coming up. I ran against him, and he stumbled on the narrow steps and went tumbling down.

This created a great commotion, and others ran to his assistance. I jumped over the fallen body and ran out of the door, and went speeding down the path to Aunt Betsy's cabin. She met me at the door, and said, "Honey, I don't know what all dis means." She had a troubled look on her face.

"Where is mother?" I said; "go with me to her."

We turned and went back to the house. At the door we met a burly-looking fellow, who said something neither of us could understand. Aunt Betsy said, "Get outen dis house, you blue-bellied Yankee. I'se gwine to find my ol' Mistis."

On we went from room to room, traveling about the same way I myself had gone. Not finding her in the house we went to the back porch and then around the house to the front porch, and there sat mother with her head resting in her hands. I crouched at her feet, buried my head between her knees, and I felt her hand on my head. I could hear her bitter sobs, as they came from an aching heart. Aunt Betsy knelt by her side, and when we arose the last

soldier had passed through the big gate and out of sight. Mother dispatched Aunt Betsy to her cabin for Uncle Huse. I went too, for my first thought was of my gun.

Uncle Huse was sitting in a corner with his head in his hands. Aunt Betsy entered, stamping her feet on the floor, and in a very tragic tone said:

"Yo' can shuffle yo'se'f away fum heah, fuh no niggah is any account dat b'longs to mean white folks like dey is. I tell yo' de debbil is in 'em, an' it's in de niggahs too and——"

I did not wait for her to finish her sentence, for I went back into the house to tell mother that Aunt Betsy was driving Uncle Huse away. When I entered she was picking up the fragments, and after hearing what I had to relate, she called Aunt Betsy in. As this good old negro entered the room and saw the wreck and ruin, with uplifted hands and glaring eyes, she shrieked, "Oh, Lawdy! Lawdy! I nebber saw such 'struction in all my bawn days. Ole Miss, what dem folks mean? I done tole my ole man he can rattle hisself away."

"Now Betsy, you must apologize to Uncle Houston, because his masters are Kentuckians and speak our language, while most of those that entered our house cannot speak one word of English, and if Houston's master had been here, things would not have been torn up so."

"Yessum, dat's so; dese are de stragglers yo' tole us about."

"Not exactly," answered my mother; "there are good generals and——"

"Well, dis mister general had better git some sogers dat can fight an' not stragglers dat tare up," said Aunt Betsy.

"Never mind now, Betsy; go get Houston, and let's get things in shape as best we can."

Uncle Houston had put my gun between his mattress and the bed cords and the soldiers had not entered his house. Our horses were all taken except Mary and old Sal. Mary was an old mare and the mother of many fine horses, and had never done any work. Sal was an old mule with good and bad traits.

It was late at night when the house was cleared and temporary beds fixed. We consoled ourselves that the Yankee army had gone south and would never come our way again.

The next day did not bring the good news we had expected, for instead of the Yankees going farther south they went into camp just five miles south of our house. We began early to gather up and hide what things we had left. Mother and Aunt Betsy took care of the things about the house, while Uncle Huse and I went to the woods with Sal and Mary and a brand new farm wagon, to hide them, in order that the Yankees would not get them.

We selected for our hiding place a beautiful grove of thickly set trees, around the edges of which were vines, briars and bushes that made a wall almost impenetrable to the eye.

This was an exceedingly quiet day, but on the morrow the scene changed. By nine o'clock the big forage wagons, with their teams of six horses, rattled over the public roads. On they came, and with them a small company of soldiers. They turned up the wide lane to the big corncrib, and began to load, while others went to the smokehouse and loaded in great sides of meat. Our chickens were taken, and young calves were thrown on top of the corn that was heaped above the sideboards of the wagon. When they had finished loading they drove away, carrying with them much of our worldly possessions.

That night we too loaded wagons from the cribs and smokehouse and hid the spoil in the woods. All that night Sal and Mary carried load after load to some dark and gloomy place in the dense woods. It seemed as though we were stealing, for not a word was spoken above a whisper. If when we pulled a chicken from its roost, she squawked, a hand grasped her about the neck and she too was silenced. When daylight came there was but little left on the place, and that little was taken by the Yankees. From that day on the big wagons pushed be-

yond our house and returned late in the afternoon heavily loaded. Every road was traveled, and every house in that rich and fertile valley was visited, and not an ear of corn nor piece of meat was left in sight.

One day as I was sitting on the front steps wondering what old Sal was thinking about, with her head tied to a swinging limb, my thoughts turned to old Red Top, my rooster, cooped up and chucked away in the tall weeds back of the garden. They would get him sure, I thought.

Just then, whack! went a rock against the back part of the house. I went around to see who had thrown it, and there I met Red Top coming straight toward me; he was very tired, and was being chased by three Yankees. I stooped and caught him in my arms, and off like a shot I went, with one Yankee in close pursuit. Over the fence I went and the Yankee after me. We entered an open field, and as there is no Yankee living who can outrun a barefooted boy, the space between us grew greater and greater until at last the pursuer gave up the chase, saying, "Go to hell with your rooster, you damned little reb." The other two laughed and told me to come back, as it was a fair race and I had won, and they would see that Red Top was not taken away from me.

Not many days had passed before we were told that General Buell had issued orders for no citizen, old or young, to be caught outside of his yard. While I am not a historian, yet I am relating facts as I know them, and though I do not know whether such orders were actually issued, I do know that someone said so, and we all obeyed. That is, we stayed indoors from about ten o'clock in the morning until about five in the evening. We visited and attended to business matters after night. It was generally understood that no soldier was allowed to go beyond the picket lines after night, so we felt safe in visiting our neighbors and gathering news about the boys who wore the gray, and talking matters over that pertained to our welfare. The mothers did the talking and the children generally played or sat and listened. One evening about twilight, there came to our house Mrs. Powers and her son Hance, Mrs. Featherston and her son Billie, Mrs. Wilhart and her son Joe. All these boys were about my age. A little later Grapevine Monke and Mrs. Monke arrived. It had been a long time since I had seen Mr. Monke, for he had been I know not where, for when anyone questioned him as to his whereabouts, he always replied that he was living away up on the mountain-side among the grapevines. When all were seated in a circle in mother's room, we boys

were told to go and play in the yard, but not to go any farther away. My curiosity would not permit me to stay out of the room long, and seeking an excuse, I entered, but only stayed long enough to hear Grapevine Monke say, "The boys are all well and the rebels would soon have General Buell and his army in a trap."

In those days our only timepiece was the moon and the stars, and judging the time by the Dipper, it was eleven o'clock when our company departed.

Early the next morning my mother sent me to deliver some papers that Mr. Monke had left the night before. She also gave me a bucket, telling me to gather some blackberries on my way back, so that we would have a berry pie for dinner. Her final word was not to loiter on the way, but come straight home, for the Yankees would be out before ten o'clock.

I found Mr. Monke at home, but what a change had come over him! He was now bent, and walked with a stick. He said his rheumatism had struck him in the night, and he guessed he would have to lay up for a while.

On starting to Mr. Monke's I had whistled up my hounds, for it had been some days since we had been out together, and I was anxious for a chase. After delivering the package I started home, but left the beaten path that

connected the two houses, turning to the right to see if the old redbird had laid another egg.

My dogs would jump and sniff the air, would look at me, wag their tails, and then bound away. We had not rambled long among briars and sage brush before up got a full-grown rabbit. As he leaped above the sage grass in plain view of the frolicking hounds, the sweet music of their baying filled the air. He headed for a thick briar patch that lay over and beyond the hill. I thought of my mother's injunction to come straight home, but the barking of the hounds lured me on in a sweeping run. The barking ceased; "they have caught him," I thought, "and now I will retrace my steps and go straight home."

Before I had time to slow up and face about, they had caught the trail again, and were going for the thicket, with Fiddler in the lead. I put forth all speed and took short cuts, and soon found myself running abreast of the lead hounds. So close were we now that the rabbit sought safety in a hollow tree. I cut a stick, split the end of it, and twisted it in the hole, but could get nothing but a bunch of fur.

I looked at the sun in the blue sky to see what time it was, and to my surprise found that it was eleven o'clock. I had over-stayed my time, and the Yankees would be out before I could get home. I gave up my prize, gath-

ered my berries, and took the winding path through the sage grass that led into the big road home. I saw a lone horseman alight, climb the fence, and take a seat on the top rail. My first impulse was to throw down my berries and run. For I thought that, as he was one of the Yankees, I could understand neither his language nor his signs. He was dressed in a beautiful uniform, with gold cord zigzagging across the breast, gold fringe on his shoulder, and gold sword and guns crossed on his cap. He was a young man with neither beard nor mustache. As I approached he said:

"Good-morning, little Reb."

What a pleasant, sweet voice to come from one dressed in blue!

I was so agreeably surprised I could not answer. He recognized my embarrassment, and asked to buy my dogs. I had now recovered enough to tell him that they were worth more than his horse.

"Then you will sell me your bucket of berries, won't you?" he said.

His tone and manner made me forget I was face to face with a Yankee, so I told him that I did not sell berries, but I would give them to him, for there were plenty more in the old field.

"No," said he, "I will give you twenty-five

cents for them and twenty-five cents for the bucket; that will make fifty cents, and you can buy something that these fields do not produce."

"I accepted his offer, and that half dollar is the first money I ever earned. As I handed him the bucket, he said:

"Bring me a big bucketful to-morrow and I will give you a dollar. You will find me at the picket post, on the road, at eleven o'clock."

"How am I to carry a big bucketful five miles?" I asked.

"Haven't you a horse?" said he.

Not thinking, I replied, "Yes, we have Sal and Mary, but we have them hid out to keep the Yankees from stealing them."

He laughed and asked how old they were.

"Well," said I, "Sal is a mule, and Uncle Bill plowed with her long before he went South with the other mules. Mary is older than I am, and they never plow with her."

"Well," said he, "you ride Mary; I don't think the Yankees will take her, for they don't take mares old enough to be great-grandmothers. Now I am going to look for you, and you must have me a big bucket of berries."

He then wrote on a piece of paper the words, "Felix Riddle, Kentucky Volunteers," mounted his horse and rode away. I showed mother my money and told her what I was going to do. I

fetches Mary to the stable that night so as to get an early start next morning.

On the following morning it did not take me long to fill my bucket with extra fine berries, and I was soon off for the picket post. I found my new acquaintance, Mr. Riddle, waiting for me. I delivered my berries, received the dollar, put my old hat on the side of my head, and walked off like one who had corn to sell.

The pickets chaffed me about being a Reb, and asked how many Rebel brothers I had, and if I had any Reb sisters. They treated me kindly, however, and made me promise to bring another bucket of berries the next day.

I now started the most profitable business anyone could have engaged in in that neighborhood, and if I could have kept it up I would have been a millionaire many times over. I not only carried one bucket the next day, but four, and kept increasing daily. I hired the neighbors' children to pick, while I went to market. Their pay was five cents a bucket, my price was one dollar, and I made two trips a day, with Sal and Mary, hitched to an old wagon.

Prosperity does not flow one way all the time, however. Reverses will come, and they came to me. My money was in greenbacks, and I carried it with me, rolled up in a round roll, pushed down in my trousers pocket. I

had started on my regular morning trip and overtook Grapevine Monke, who said he was going down to camp to get some medicine for his rheumatism. I asked him to ride with me, but he declined, saying the jolting of the wagon hurt worse than walking.

On I went, thinking I would soon be able to buy out the entire Yankee army. As I neared the picket line I had to cross a deep ravine with thick woods on each side of the road. Just as I started the ascent of the steep hill, I was commanded to halt, and looking up, I saw two soldiers standing near the roadside, with their guns pointed toward me. Two others approached and said, "If you holler we will blow your brains out." They threw a twenty-dollar Confederate bill into my lap, saying, "You take that Reb money and we'll take the berries." To this I objected, and stated that I had engaged them to the pickets, but they would not listen to me.

After they had emptied my wagon one of them asked, "Have you any money?"

Without thinking, both hands went to the pocket in which was the roll of money. Before I hardly knew what had happened I found myself lying on the ground with a gash on my lip, my trousers ripped open, my money gone, and my assailants out of sight. How long I lay there I know not. Just as I was crawling out

from under the wagon I heard the sound of a horse's hoofs striking the hard ground, and up came a Yankee officer. I had now learned to distinguish an officer from a private by his uniform. He jumped from his horse, wiped the blood from my face, and asked how it had happened. I gave him a full account of what had just occurred as best I could. He quickly mounted his horse, took me up behind him and spurred off in a gallop.

To the picket lines we went, he cursing and swearing vengeance on the robbers, if caught. For miles from one picket to another we went, and always received the same reply, that no soldiers had been seen outside of the lines. He gave each guard the same instructions—to arrest and bring before him all soldiers caught outside of the lines that day.

We returned to our starting-point and found Sal and Mary dozing in the warm sunshine. He pushed my hair out of my eyes, looked at my swollen lip, lifted me into the old rickety wagon, and said, "I will punish those cowardly brutes to the full limit if I can only catch them. Some day you will make a good soldier, no matter on which side of the firing line," and then bade me good-by.

CHAPTER IX

MY business venture was now a thing of the past. I was completely a bankrupt, and had not money enough to pay my hands for the last day's picking. I settled with them by giving them their day's picking for pay.

Each day the big forage wagons passed our house, going farther and farther away from camp to gather in food for themselves and horses. I had met Lieutenant Riddle several times during my business enterprise, and he always spoke kindly to me and encouraged me in my business venture.

One day he called at our house to inquire why I had ceased to do business. Mother gave him a detailed account of the enterprise, its success, and its sudden ending. He expressed sympathy for me, and said that the men who had robbed me would be punished if found, but that as all private soldiers look much alike it would be useless to try to identify them, even if I should go through camp with him.

It was now August, and we had a field of corn that looked very promising. My duty each morning was to keep the fence in repair, so as to keep the stock, that had been driven

to the swampy country, from destroying the crop. This field was a mile off from the house, and lay alongside of the public road. The north and west sides abutted against a thick wood. One morning Aunt Betsy had me to put on my best and only clean suit of cotton trousers and shirt, saying "Yous got to wear them till Sunday, for Ise gwine to wash to-day, and dem's all yous got out'n de kittle."

I started on my usual rounds, looking after the fence, and as I neared the northwest corner a hog jumped out of a mudhole at the root of a large tree, and went tearing through the dense woods.

Near this tree the fence was partly down, and I had just laid up the last rail when I heard several shots along the east side of the field, and then the clatter of horses' hoofs going north on the well-packed road. These sounds died away, and I knew that whoever it was had turned west and was coming in my direction. The firing started again, faster and faster, and began to cut twigs from the trees over my head, when finally a ball struck the rail I had just laid up, within about three feet of my head.

I lost no time in getting behind, and perching myself on the root of the same big tree above the loblolly hole in which the hog had been wallowing. I heard the voices of men talking, and then a ball tore the bark from the trunk of the

tree, about twelve inches above my head. As the shattered pieces fell in my face, I lost my hold and fell into the mudhole over my eyes. I managed to wipe the sticky mud from my eyes, but ventured not from my hiding-place for several hours. I went home by the back way, and as I drew near the old well, the washing-place, Aunt Betsy had just taken some clothes from the boiling-pot, and was pounding them with a paddle, keeping time, by swinging her body to and fro, to an old song she was singing. She did not see me as I approached the fence that stood only a few feet from her back. One verse of the old song ran thus:

“When de Lord called Moses,
Moses refused to answer,
De third time he call,
Moses say ——”

Then I chimed in by saying, “Here I am, Aunt Betsy.”

Aunt Betsy was not expecting that kind of an answer, and turned to see who it was. I was now climbing the fence, and she could only see me through the cracks, and evidently could not make out who or what I was, for she gave a shriek, went waddling off up the path toward the house, and all I could make out was, “Old Miss, Old Miss.”

I sat on the fence and laughed at the wad-

dling of that fat form. I waited until she was inside the yard fence, and then I too started toward the house.

Mother heard Aunt Betsy's cries and came hurriedly to the back door. As I entered the back gate I heard Aunt Betsy say, "I sho' saw somethin' come out'n de ground, en it could talk." Just then Aunt Betsy's eyes rested on me and she said:

"Well, for lan' sakes, Ise nearly killed myse'f runnin' fum yo'. An' heah yo' is done sp'ilt your Sunday clo's. Ise a great min' to make yo' go naked de balance of de week, fo' de shirt yo' wore las' I just took out of de bilin' water when you——"

I laughed at Aunt Betsy, and then told mother and her how near I had come to being killed and why my clothes were so muddy. This story struck a sympathetic chord in the old negro's breast, and she said:

"Cum on, honey, Ise goin' to git dat mud off'en yo', if I hab to put yo' in de bilin' water wid de clothes."

It took but a few moments to run a stitch or two in some old cast-off garment, and I was on my way to the well to be cleaned up.

Aunt Betsy was sensitive ever after about the scare I had given her, and mother would not let me tell about it.

The shooting I have just spoken about

proved to be a very serious affair for the people in that valley. I knew not then who it was, nor do I know now. And I will say again that I am not writing history, but telling what I saw, what I heard, and what I did.

The next day I saw hundreds of soldiers ride past our house. Sometimes they kept to the road, sometimes they did not, and they seemed to be everywhere. Lieutenant Riddle, in company with six or seven others, rode up to our house, hitched their horses, and rested on the broad piazza. I sat on the front steps and hugged the big square post, and mother occupied the big arm-chair, while these soldiers talked. My mind was absorbed in contemplation of their beautiful guns, swords and belts, when suddenly I heard Lieutenant Riddle exclaim in a loud tone:

"I am a Kentuckian! I have a brother in the Rebel army, and you are a damned liar!" He jumped from his chair, drew his sword, and dashed forward.

What occurred during the next few minutes I know not, for I had tucked my head behind the big square post. I heard the rustling of feet, the clanking of steel, and looking up, I saw them leading someone away, while Lieutenant Riddle stood with drawn sword. A few minutes later he called my mother and apolo-

gized, and as he bowed and backed out he said:

"There are some things that I cannot and will not bear, even from those who wear the same uniform as I."

Every day the country was traversed to and fro by Yankee soldiers. They had taken and carried into camp some of the older men.

News spread over the countryside that every house was to be burned. For three days in succession we packed what few household goods we had left, and piled them in one corner of the yard, waiting for the torch to be applied. This scare soon passed over and later we heard that the order had been rescinded. Then other news spread that everything was to be taken, and the women and children would be left to starve to death, and that if anyone was caught outside of his gate he would be shot to death. Such news as this was wafted every day from house to house, and what gave color to these rumors was the fact that soldiers were patrolling every nook and corner. Then a circumstance occurred that made all tremble.

Less than five miles from our house there lived two brothers, Jake and Bill Sowder. They had lived almost long enough to celebrate their seventy-fifth birthday. They each had a son named Jake and Bill also. These sons lacked some three years of being out of their teens.

Their farms joined and ofttimes they shared the products with the women whose husbands were fighting with the army in gray. They were the advisers of the women and children, and were men whose humble lives had been spent in doing good to all, and wrong to none.

These men were taken from their homes and shot to death, and their sons were made to bear witness to the shooting. After the shooting of their fathers the boys were given the choice of life or death, upon the condition that if they lived they must fight in the Union army. They were of a divided opinion, one choosing life and the other death. The latter stood in his father's tracks when a ball pierced his heart, and when it had ceased to beat his body was lying across that of his father. The three bodies were left in the woods to be cared for by friends. The son who had chosen life turned his back upon the scene and marched away to take the oath of allegiance to the Federal cause.*

This news of the death of these three innocent people pierced the hearts of everyone with fear. Mother stopped me from going to fix up

*If the reader will read the "Rise and Fall of the Confederacy," he will find that President Davis must have had this instance in his mind when he wrote to the authorities at Washington that if they did not cease killing old and innocent citizens he would retaliate.

the fences, and never let me go farther from the house than the barn, to look after Sal and Mary. Our nearest neighbors seldom called, and our only regular visitors were Aunt Betsy and Uncle Huse.

CHAPTER X

IT was a dark night, and the gathering clouds, the distant lightning, and the low rumbling of thunder told of an approaching storm. Aunt Betsy and Uncle Huse had gone to their cabin, mother had pulled down the shades and bolted the doors, and I was taking a bath preparatory to going to bed when a very gentle tap was heard at the front door. It was the kind our neighbors generally gave when they wanted to give or receive some good or bad news.

Mother arose and opened the door without asking the usual question, "Who is there?" I, thinking it was some friends or acquaintances, never looked up until I heard mother say, "Who are you, and what do you want here at this time of night?"

A voice from without replied, "A friend and acquaintance, though my clothes would indicate a foe."

"I believe I know the voice," said mother, "and I will ask you to step in, especially as there seems to be a storm coming."

The visitor approached, pulled off his cap, and extended his right hand. Then mother exclaimed, "Well! if it isn't Jake Sowder!" He was dressed in the uniform of a Yankee private soldier.

He gave a detailed account of the killing of his father, uncle and cousin, and told why he had joined the Yankee army. And now he was classed as a deserter and was making his way to the Confederate lines, and had come to our house to get a change of clothing if mother would be kind enough to give it to him.

"My home, you know," he said, as the tears ran down his cheeks, "will be watched closely, and if I am caught it means death to me."

"I'll not only give you a change of clothes, but I will aid you otherwise if you will do as I say," said mother.

"As I am not privileged to go home and take the advice of my mother, I will do whatever you may advise," he replied.

"It seems," said mother, "that fortune has favored you thus far, for I do not think anyone will be out on a stormy night like this. Now, I am going to call Betsy; you will be as safe in her hands as in mine, and besides, through her I can keep you in hiding until a more suitable season for you to continue your journey."

So saying, she threw a shawl over her head and went out through the storm to Aunt Betsy's cabin. While mother was gone I told Jake I had found some good Yankees and some bad ones, and if he could find Lieutenant Riddle I believed he would show him the way to the

Confederate lines. Jake made no reply to me, but sat with his head in his hands, the tears coursing down his cheeks.

Mother soon returned, accompanied by Aunt Betsy, who had known Jake Sowder from childhood. The old woman said: "Jake, I hearn yo' jined de Yanks for good."

"Not for good, Aunt Betsy," he replied.

"Well, chile, what yo' doin' wid dem blue clothes on?" she asked. "Some mighty mean folks wears dem kin' ob clothes; you better take dem off."

"Come, Aunt Betsy," mother interposed, "that's just what we are going to do. Go upstairs and get some of Pell's clothes; I think with a little alteration they will fit, for Jake is now about the age of Pell when he went to the war."

Aunt Betsy hurried off upstairs to get the clothes, while mother got needles and thread, and soon the blue clothes were changed, and Jake was once more dressed in a country boy's suit of clothes.

"Now, Betsy," said mother, "Jake will have to sleep in the garret of your house for a few days, as that I think is the safest place, for I have noticed not a Yankee has ever entered your house. Take some quilts and have Houston make him a pallet."

It was near the hour of midnight when Jake

was safely stored in the loft of Aunt Betsy's cabin. Then mother and Aunt Betsy cut the blue clothes into scraps and burned them in the cook stove. They took the ashes and buttons and went out in the rain and buried them. When morning came the rain had ceased, the clouds had blown away, and the sun shone brightly in the blue sky, but not a trace of the night's work could be seen.

On the next day, as usual, several companies of soldiers were riding to and fro. For some unexplained reason I loitered about Aunt Betsy's cabin more than usual. She and Uncle Huse had taken their rawhide chairs and were seated one on each side of the door on the shady side of the cabin. About the middle of the afternoon a Yankee soldier rode up and said:

"Good-evening, Auntie."

"Yo' needn't say good-evening to me; I don't know yo'," said Aunt Betsy.

"Well, you ought to," he replied, "for I have come all the way from Massachusetts to kill out these damned Rebels and free you."

"Ise jus' as free as I wants to be right here wid Old Miss," said Aunt Betsy.

"Do you know whether or not any Rebs are in hiding around here?" he asked.

"If dey wuz' don't yo' spec dey would be

lookin' for you', instead of yo' lookin' fo' dem?" said Aunt Betsy. She then turned her head and began to pick at the dirt in the cracks of the cabin.

"How about you, Uncle; can't you tell me whether any Rebels are chucked away in the garret?" the soldier asked.

"No, sir!" responded Uncle Huse, "I jus' want to see Marse Ned; he is wid you some-whar."

"Yes, damn him, he was with us, but he gave us the slip," said the man. "He hasn't crossed that mountain yet, and is hiding under some old woman's petticoat." Then dismounting, he threw the reins over the horse's head, and started for the door of the cabin.

At that moment Uncle Huse quickly caught the reins of the bridle, and called "Mister!" By this time the man had reached the door, which was standing wide open, and turned about to catch what Uncle Huse was going to say. Looking square in the face of the old negro, he asked: "What is it you have to say, Uncle?"

"Well, I just wanted to tell you dat when de war broke out, Marse Ned went Norf and Marse Bob went Souf, and I haven't seen need-er since. Dats de Gord's truf," replied Uncle Huse.

"What's that you say—one master went

north and the other went south?" said the man.

"Dat's jus' what I done tole you," answered Uncle Huse.

"Well, perhaps I am mistaken in the place, for I don't think the Reb I am after would stop in a divided home." And with this he mounted and rode away.

When he had gone, Aunt Betsy chuckled and said, "Dat's a mean white man, but yo' sho' fooled him."

"Yes," said I, "he was going to get Jake, and my gun too, if Uncle Huse hadn't stopped him."

When the evening twilight came not a soldier was in sight. Mother and I were seated on the large piazza, and neither of us had spoken for some time, when suddenly Grapevine Monke appeared around the corner of the house. He had come by the path through the fields. He supported himself, as he walked, with a crooked stick.

"Take a seat," mother invited.

"No, thanks," said he; "I was just hobbling about, and thought I'd drop by and leave you a bit of news." Then he raised his right hand, and with his index finger he pointed to the mountains, saying, "To-night at ten o'clock." With that the bent and decrepit old man toddled in the direction of his home.

Mother busied herself while Aunt Betsy got supper. When it was dark, and the doors were closed and the shades pulled down, mother, Jake, and myself all sat around a small table and ate our supper of corn bread and sorghum molasses. A little later footsteps were heard on the front porch, and there entered Grapevine Monke, tall and straight, and walking with an elastic step.

"Come, Jake," he said; "let's be off; there is no time to lose."

"Sit down, Mr. Monke," said mother, "Jake will be ready in a few minutes."

When he had seated himself I said: "You must have gotten well of your rheumatism mighty quick."

"Yes, sonny," he replied, "the kind I have is governed by will power. When you grow older I'll teach you the art."

Jake arose and addressed Aunt Betsy: "Aunt Betsy, I will shake hands with you and say good-by. You and your cabin have sheltered me through a trying ordeal, and if luck follows me, I will soon have a Rebel gun in my hands and will shoot Yankees with the same coolness that I would shoot a squirrel from the tops of those tall oak trees."

"Well, Jake," she responded, "don't forget to kill dat one dat tried to find yo' in my cabin."

"I heard his voice, but did not see his face, and for that reason I fear I cannot pick him out, although I would like to," said Jake. Then he shook mother's hand and said, "My blood-thirstiness will be satisfied when I have laid three under the sod, but my duties to the Rebel cause will not be ended until the last gun has been fired, and I hope to be the man that fires it."

"Let's go," suggested Grapevine Monke, "for we travel neither road nor paths. I have selected a shining star to guide our course, and when to-morrow's sun peeps over the mountain-top at the Yankee camp below, we will be out of their reach and can then lie down for our first rest."

Then the door closed, and the two figures were lost from sight by the outer darkness.

The next morning Mrs. Featherston and her son, Billie, came over and spent the day with us. Billie was perhaps a few months older than myself, but looked several years older. He was a tall, thin boy. Our mothers gave us the usual instructions not to go outside of the yard. Mother and Mrs. Featherston talked in a very low tone of voice, at times scarcely above a whisper. We had about the usual quota of soldiers riding the country that day in all directions.

The day passed slowly for Billie and me, for we longed to get out and throw rocks at birds,

run rabbits, and shoot woodpeckers with our bows and arrows. The sun was slanting far to the west when Billie suggested:

"The Yankees have all gone into camp; let's scale the fence and go wade in the branch."

On many occasion we had ducked and dived in the little pool of water by the roadside, and it was lots of fun. Near this pool stood a large elm tree; we had climbed to its topmost branches many a time, and played squirrel, springing from one branch to another. I crept to the house and found our mothers leaning forward, their heads close together, as if they did not want anyone to hear what they were saying. They did not notice me, so I turned and ran for that big elm tree, Billie close behind me, and soon we were in its topmost branches. It was not long before we heard the pounding of horses' hoofs. It was the Yankee cavalry coming. We heard a voice say, "Bushwhackers, shoot them!" Bang went a gun, and a ball tore through the limbs of the tree above our heads.

We lost no time in getting out of that tree; in fact, we almost fell out. In a few minutes we were on our feet, but completely surrounded by soldiers on horseback.

I looked at Billie, who, poor fellow, was trembling from head to foot, shifting his weight from one foot to the other in rapid succession. I did not feel just right myself, for I knew not

just what was to happen next. Then a voice said:

"Now, Corporal, you've got your bushwhackers; what are you going to do with them?"

"By God! I am going to make them squeal," said the Corporal. "Open ranks." And pointing his gun to the north end of the road he continued: "Now, little Rebs, strike that road, and make double quick time." I obeyed, and could hear the patter of Billie's bare feet as he fell in behind me, the Yankees following him closely.

"Make 'em squeal," thought I. "Now that would do for Billie, for he could mimic a bird, beast, or almost anything, but for me—well——" I thought of a hundred things that might happen, but no one thing in particular, my mind was so unsettled, and the only thing I was sure of was that I was running and was followed by Billie and the Yankee soldiers. We kept a kind of a dog trot for about a mile, going away from home and also from the Yankee camp. Just as we reached a little rocky knoll, we were commanded to halt.

I was sorry they had selected this spot, for there was a superstitious idea among children and the negroes that the Indians in the years gone by did their scalping here and buried the bodies under this hill. But as I was not in command, and was perfectly willing to obey orders,

I stopped. They formed a circle, with Billie and me in the center, then all dismounted and the Corporal gave orders to blindfold the tall lad and bring him before him. Billie was soon blindfolded, and the Corporal said:

"Johnnie Reb, I have blindfolded you so you can think fast. Now we know there are bushwhackers in these diggings, and you must tell where they are."

Billie trembled, but opened not his mouth.

"Now," said the Corporal, "I am going to back you up against this tree, and will count three, and if by that time you do not tell where and how to find those Rebel bushwhackers, I will order you shot to death."

I got weak in the knees and sank down, while they led Billie off and braced him up against a big oak tree. Then the Corporal counted in a clear tone, "One, two, three." Bang! went a gun, and Billie fell forward, badly scared but unhurt, for the gun had been pointed toward the sky. "Bring me a rope," said the Corporal, "and tie it around the little fellow's neck; he'll tell, I know."

The rope was tied good and strong, and I felt that my neck would be stretched a little, but not broken, for I saw the joke they had played on Billie. Just then I heard the sound of horses coming toward us in a gallop, and as the troops rode up I heard a voice shout:

"What the hell are you fellows doing?" and I recognized Lieutenant Felix Riddle as the speaker.

The Corporal replied: "Lieutenant, to make a boar come from the bush, make the pigs squeal."

"Yes," said the Lieutenant, "and if the boar came you cowardly curs would drop your tails and run. Now mount your horses, go in front of me, and let those boys go home."

As soon as they were out of sight, I asked: "Billie, were you scared?"

"Was I scared?" he returned; "well, I guess I was; my legs wobbled worse than my old jumping-jack."

"Well, we had better go, for they will be coming back before long," said I.

"Well," said he, "just as soon as I can get my legs in the same notion as my head, I'll be getting away from here." Then he made an effort to get up, and in a few minutes we struck a dog-trot for home.

Aunt Betsy was away down by the branch looking for us, and as soon as we came in sight she began to scold: "Whar has yo' been? Ise bawled my brains out tryin' to find yo', and here it is night, and yo' mammy's bawlin' and bawlin' case yo' out dar in de dark. Now go on fast as you can."

We renewed our trot, and it was not long

until we were in the house, where we received a good scolding, and Mrs. Featherston and Billie left for home.

The next day I received instructions from Aunt Betsy to kill the only goose we had left, which I proceeded to do; but when the head was severed from the body, the blood spirted all over the bosom of my shirt and down my sleeves. As washday was several days off, this gave me a good excuse to go to the big pond and wash the blood off. I stripped myself and left my blood-stained clothes on the bank, while I took a few dives in the deep hole. When I chanced to look up I saw some cavalrymen approaching. I thought at once that my bloody shirt might cause suspicion, so I rolled it up and dashed it into the weeds, but not quick enough to keep the approaching Yankees from seeing me.

I had just come up from a deep dive when they rode up. "Hello, little Reb; can you swim?" said one.

"I wouldn't be in ten-foot water if I couldn't," I replied.

"Well, I guess you had better swim in here," he ordered.

I did as directed, and when I stood before him he asked:

"What was that you threw into those weeds?"

"My shirt," I replied.

"What did you do that for?" he questioned.

"Because I wanted to," I answered.

"I expect you had better get it and bring it to me," he said.

I felt a faintness at this order, but did as I was commanded.

He looked at it a moment and then said:

"I guess you had better put it on and go to camp with us."

I hustled into it at once and started with his command toward the Yankee camp.

We had to pass by my home, and I looked toward the house, trying to see Aunt Betsy or mother, but I could not see either, and on I went with these soldiers riding behind me. We had gone about half a mile, when we met some other soldiers, and as they sat on their horses and talked, I backed up against the fence awaiting further orders. They talked and laughed, but I could not catch the thread of their discourse. But it was not about me or anything concerning our country.

I now saw Aunt Betsy coming, head thrown back and her red handkerchief flapping in the wind. As she approached she fairly yelled, "What you doin' heah? Cum on right home to your ma!"

"Hold on," interrupted the Yankee officer, "that's my prisoner."

Aunt Betsy paid not the least attention to him, but pulled me along, and said: "Ise got to get yo' out of dem goose-blood clo's if you have to put on yo' Sunday duds."

"Halt!" commanded the Yank again, but there was no halt in Aunt Betsy. "Don't that beat hell!" said the officer, as the others laughed.

"Yous know better dan sochate wid po' white trash," said Aunt Betsy, as she held my hand, as we together rushed on toward home.

As the days went by I grew more and more timid about leaving home. My dogs would wander to the fields alone, and give chase to the big red fox; I could hear their baying as they flew along the mountainside on a hot trail. I longed to go, but still I was afraid I might meet some more mean Yankee soldiers.

The soldiers passed our house every day, sometimes stopping to get a drink of water. They came from all directions and went in all directions, and just where they were going and what they were after puzzled me. I felt depressed, cowed, browbeaten. I began to lose my boyish spirit, and drooped around the house, for there is nothing in life to a boy if he has to be corraled inside a board fence. But anon there comes a change, and in the nick of time it came to me. We discovered that there was more activity among the soldiers than usual,

and that they now galloped by instead of leisurely riding in a slow walk. Our neighbors still secretly came in at night, and would guess and prophesy what all this excitement meant.

About nine o'clock one morning mother told me to take Sal and Mary to the woods, for the Yankees had broken camp, and were retreating over the same road they had come, and no doubt they would take every horse they could get their hands on. I took with me little Dick, a negro boy of about my own age.

Dick was a good playmate of mine, and would stand by me through thick and thin. Nothing pleased us better than to take Sal and Mary to the woods. The bridles were soon on and we headed for the woods with my dog Fiddler at our heels. We went to the same secluded spot where months before we had carried our new wagon, and there it was yet, just as we had left it, save that the tires were a little rusty. We tied the mule and mare to a swinging limb, and selected for ourselves a brush pile. We burrowed under this and made room for ourselves and the dog Fiddler. We lay comfortably nestled in our new quarters, and could hear the rattle of the big army wagons over the hill and along the big road as they were leaving camp. As the shadows of evening were falling, through the opening of the brush which served as a window, we

saw four Yankees coming almost in a direct line toward us. Fiddler pricked up his ears and growled; Dick tried to stop him by holding his mouth shut, when old Sal poked her long ears forward and brayed. This attracted the soldiers' attention, and they beat their way through the outer edge of our inclosure and, seeing the wagon, began to pile brush and logs under it, as if they intended to burn it. One of them approached too near to our brush-pile, a maneuver to which Fiddler took exception, and in spite of Dick's grip he raised his bristles, and growling, tried to get loose from us.

This brought the Yankees still closer, and one of them raised his gun as if he were going to shoot into the brush. "Don't shoot!" I cried; "we will come out," and as we crawled from under the brushpile the soldier said to his companions:

"Look here, boys; here is the damnedest combination you ever saw in one nest: a dog, a negro, and a toe-headed Reb, all of one hatching."

Fiddler growled, while Dick and I trembled as they discussed what they were going to do with us. The leader then commanded:

"Now stand right here until we get ready, and you will make good kindling to start the fire."

I made a sign to Dick, and we took the first

opportunity to make a break for the narrow path that led into the thicket. I was ahead, with Dick and Fiddler close behind me. I could almost hear the beating of their hearts.

"Halt!" was the next order. But neither of us thought of stopping, and it only increased our speed. Then bang went a rifle; Dick passed me, Fiddler next, and I was bringing up the rear with all my might, when bang again went the rifle. The space between us widened at every step, Dick still leading. Fiddler and I did not seem to be in the race. Once more we heard the rifle's report, but neither felt the sting of the bullet or its whistle, and were soon over the hill and out of sight.

When I climbed on the front porch at home I saw the rear guard of General Buell's army moving out of sight at the same place I had seen them moving into sight months before.

CHAPTER XI

THE next day after General Buell broke camp our neighbors gathered to know if the army had gone, as Aunt Betsy said, "for good," or merely to move their camp to a more prosperous settlement. Preacher Oakes gave it as his opinion that they were gone to stay, "For," said he, "I saw them cross the river and move northward, going like hell beating tanbark." Then he apologized. "For," said he, "I can use cusswords without stuttering."

We visited the deserted camp, and I brought back a dray-load of ammunition, pocket knives and things of all descriptions. Several of the girls found some very interesting love-letters, written by Northern girls to their sweethearts in the Yankee army. Some of these letters would indicate that the writers believed the Southern girls were regular soldiers, doing military service in the field. One of them ran thus :

BOSTON, MASS., August 12, 1862.

DEAR NED: Your last letter to hand, and it certainly was a long time on the road.

I hope you have changed camps, for I don't think you would do much fighting if the enemy, down there, is a lot of girls. You spoke of being almost captured by them. Now I want you to run until your tongue lolls out, for it

would be a pretty comeoff to have you sitting around and a girl with a gun standing guard over you.

Mother says the Southern girls are all pretty. If they are, we are just licked, and you tell your General that you want to come home.

I would rather hear that you were dead on the battle-field, than dead in love with one of those Rebel girls.

Lovingly yours,

LAURA BLUNT.

Here is a verse that was preserved with some of the relics of that time:

TO MY DARLING BEN:

Hike away, hike away, to you I say,
From the Rebel girl dressed in gray.
She will shoot you with her goo-goo eyes,
And claim you for a Yankee prize.

Remember the Yankee girl dressed in blue;
She will always be true to you,
And when this cruel war is at an end,
Come home, come home, my darling Ben.

ELVIRA JOHNSON.

It was now the season of the year when the crops must be gathered, the winter wood gotten up, and the hogs and cattle driven from the swampy country.

I brought Sal and Mary and the farm wagon from their hiding-place in the woods. The fire set by the soldiers had gone out and had not

burned the wagon at all. I was summoned again to go to mill, but this time I had to ride Old Sal. I found that the old mill-house had been riddled with bullets, and the old miller, bareheaded and barefooted, talked of nothing but his trials and troubles.

On my way home I dropped the reins over Sal's neck, and was thinking of other and happier days, when I rode a fine racer, when suddenly Sal's ears went forward, her heels went up, and I went sprawling over her head. My next thought was that a heavy mountain was pressing in my chest, and I was trying to extricate myself. Just how long I had lain there I knew not, but when I opened my eyes, I found myself on my back with the sack of meal across my chest. The sun was far to the west, and there was Old Sal standing about fifty feet away with her long ears flopped toward me. I felt the effect of that fall for several days after.

Grapevine Monke had now come home again. It was his first visit since the night he left with Jake Sowders. Through him, mother learned that brother Pell had been exchanged, and was now in General Bragg's army, and brother Wilton was a prisoner on Johnson Island, badly wounded. He told of battles and victories, but as they happened in other States they have no place in this book. I entreated him to let me go with him to his mountain

home, that I might hear the talking of his grapevines.

"When you grow older," he said, "you will grow wiser; and if the war continues I will show and explain to you things that you now do not understand."

That fall we had quilting bees, dances and parties, and all the usual social gatherings peculiar to the neighborhood, and thus the fall months passed.

Aunt Betsy said she felt Christmas in her bones, and "She was sho' goin' to hab her Christmas dinner." We had a right to rejoice, for as we heard, the Yankees were still beating tan bark, with General Bragg close after them.

I had several 'possums, rabbits, coons, squirrels, and ducks salted down for Christmas, which it was Aunt Betsy's delight to cook.

When that festive day arrived, the old mahogany table, with one wing torn off by General Buell's soldiers on that eventful day when they first made their appearance in our neighborhood, was brought out and put into service. One of our guests was a tall lean boy, Hance Powers, with an appetite of such proportions that Aunt Betsy said that all the "varmints" in the river bottom would not fill him up.

Everything in readiness, Grapevine Monke took the head of the table, preacher Oakes the foot, the mothers and children on the sides,

and Hance sat opposite me. Mother asked Brother Oakes to return thanks, and with bowed heads we waited. To a hungry boy seconds seemed minutes, and minutes hours. All was still, so I peeped through my fingers to know the cause of the delay. There sat Brother Oakes with his mouth open and his jaws locked. Hance, also anxious to have the grace over, said:

"Say, Parson, say 'damn it,' and maybe you can get your mouth off."

This gave the parson the cue, and we were soon doing full justice to the meal that was spread before us.

When the feast was over, the tables were cleared and the room was made ready for the country Christmas dance.

Uncle Huse selected a place where he had plenty of elbow and foot room, and after a preliminary tuning and scraping, gayly shouted in a clear voice, "Honah yo' pardners," and the dance began, to end when the stars mark the hour of going home.

Grapevine Monke bade us all good-by, and said that before the year 1862 would draw the mantle for its long sleep there would be another battle fought less than half a hundred miles away, for General Bragg and General Rosecrans were preparing for a great struggle. "To-night," said he, "I'll go to my mountain

home, and from my grapevines I'll catch the news of Southern victory."

The thirtieth day of December, 1862, was a beautiful, clear, warm sunshiny day. In the evening, as the sun was slanting to the west, I went to the woodpile and stretching myself out to take a sunbath, dozed off to sleep. While I lay sleeping there came a rattling, rumbling sound similar to distant thunder. It startled me, and I quickly jumped to my feet and looked for the approaching cloud. It was a clear, bright, sunshiny day. Before I could gather my thoughts, peal after peal seemed to shake the ground. This roaring, rattling noise vibrated along the mountainside.

I ran to the house and found mother in the big armchair weeping. I rushed on to Aunt Betsy's cabin, and as I approached I heard her say, "Old man, get on your Sunday duds, for don't you hear dis old earth crackin' and bustin' up? Don't you feel it buckin' an' tearin' de chinkin' out ob de wall?" She then turned her wild and glaring eyes on me and said, "Call your dogs, honey, for Old Gabe is goin' to blow his horn, an' we's all got to go."

"Go where?" I asked.

"It's as how's youse been livin' as to whar youse gwine." she answered.

"Let's wait till the fight is over," said I.

"What fight?" asked Aunt Betsy.

"Didn't you hear Grapevine Monke say that General Bragg and somebody was going to have a fight," I answered.

"Is dat what's makin' all dis noise?" said Aunt Betsy.

For more than two hours this dreadful noise kept up, and then all was still. It was a long and wakeful night for mother, for brother Pell was there as was Stewart Monke also.

The next morning, December 31st, before the sun had risen over the mountaintops to kiss the old year good-by, I was aroused from my deep slumber by the roaring of artillery, which jarred the house and rattled the windows. I wandered aimlessly through the house, out into the yard, and across the fields to the railroad, and there saw a train going south, bearing broken and shattered, blood-stained artillery, and then another train bearing wounded soldiers, with bandaged heads and arms in slings. I retraced my steps homeward and crept into Aunt Betsy's cabin and told her what I had seen.

Uncle Huse asked if I had seen his Marse Ned or Bob, and then added that he believed the fool white folks were going to kill their fool selves and leave the poor negroes to starve. When the sun had set on the last day of the year all was still. We were too far away from

the battlefield to hear the groans of the wounded.

On the morrow, New Year's Day, at intervals we heard the cannonading. It was the custom thereabout to make this a legal holiday—a day of rest and freedom for the negroes, who visited friends on neighboring plantations. Among the number that came to our house were two stout negro boys about sixteen years old. They belonged to different families, and each had a young master in Captain Ikard's company, and they disputed and fussed about the bravery of these two young soldiers until they came to blows. While an artillery battle could be heard in the distance, I witnessed a fist-fight between these two boys. This was a drawn battle, for they were evenly matched, and it was never settled which of the two soldiers was the bravest, but I regret to chronicle that when the real battle was over, both of these young soldiers were numbered with the dead.

The second day of the new year was a repetition of the last day of the old year, a thundering, rattling noise from morning until the going down of the sun. The next day all was confusion. Had General Bragg whipped or been whipped? Was his army moving northward or southward?

There was a gathering at the old log school-house, perhaps to learn the outcome of the

Murfreesboro battle. Preacher Oakes was there, and arose to give, perhaps, some word of comfort, but his jaws refused to work, and he stood with his mouth wide open, when someone cried out that Grapevine Monke was coming.

I left with the others to meet this great and good man, and never knew whether any stayed to hear the talk that Brother Oakes was to have made. The tall figure of Grapevine Monke stood in the midst of the crowd of women and children, and he said: "Men differ on political questions, and this has led to war. We cannot have war without battles, and battles cannot be fought without some surrendering their lives to a cause they love best. The sweetest and best death comes to those who die in defense of their country. It is not yet known who has survived and passed through the great struggle, but be of good cheer, for an all-wise Providence works all things for the best."

CHAPTER XII

IT was said that General Bragg had won the battle, but had given up the field and had moved his army and pitched his camp at Tullahoma, less than twenty miles from our home. Many of Captain Ikard's company had lost their lives in the battle, but brother Pell and Stewart Monke were among those untouched by shell or bullet.

On the same spot that General Buell had camped the summer before, General Bragg's army dug trenches, threw up breastworks, built forts, and swung large cannon into place. I selected in one of the forts a place that I intended to occupy when the next battle occurred.

The winter had been a hard one and our stock was poor, but with what we had, Uncle Huse began plowing and harrowing preparing for another crop. My supply of ammunition had not given out, and I supplied the family with meat. The girls had dances and parties, and these were attended by the soldier boys at home on furlough. The younger set of boys began to be jealous, and they said they wished old Bragg would hike away with his army.

Brother Pell came home often, and it was

my duty to take him back to camp. In that camp I saw a youth, seemingly not much older than myself, carrying a rail, back and forth. I was told that General Bragg was having him punished for staying at home with his mother, and not being there at rollcall. Thus as the weeks and months went by, the forts were made larger and the ditches were dug deeper.

About June 1st this army was going to move. It was Pell's last visit home. His furlough was over, and he must answer to rollcall in the morning. It was nine o'clock at night when he and I started for the camp. It was a dark night, though now and then the stars would peep through the drifting clouds.

Silently we rode through the dense woods, under the branches of the large trees overhanging the road. Then a dark cloud rose in the west, and the lightning blinded us, the wind swayed the tall oaks, and the thunder rattled and rolled and frightened our horses, so that they refused to keep the road, and we soon found that we were lost.

Brother Pell dismounted, felt his way through the darkness, and soon bumped up against a rail pen. We tied the horses and sought shelter under the roof of this rail pen. It soon began to rain, and Pell stretched himself out and soon was sound asleep. The unevenness of the ground kept me from crouch-

ing close to him without rolling right on top of him. I closed my eyes and could hear the rain pattering on the roof and the wind whistling through the cracks.

Then I saw skeletons float past me; some stopped, placed their bony fingers on the rails, and made faces at me. Some were headless, some without arms or legs. The ground under me began to move and the earth was thrown up, and out came a skeleton. He stared at me and laughed at me, and his teeth fell out, he stretched his arm and with his icy fingers clutched my neck and dropped me into the hole he had just come out of.

I was borne away on an invisible net to a strange land; it was a tented camping-ground, and all around sat skeletons that could talk and laugh. As I stood watching this strange, weird scene, one of their number arose, and with his long fleshless finger, beckoned me to him. I moved close to him, for I was awfully scared. He said:

"Are they taking kids like you to fill our places? We are the ones that fought in the Murfreesboro battle. See here!" placing his bony finger to his left side. "I was charging the Yankee battery, and a shell tore off my left side, and I haven't been able to find all my ribs." Then he crossed his legs. "Ouch," said he, "I have rheumatism in my hip; I am

sorry I didn't swap it off to some Yankee when we were making ourselves up. It was an awful task to pick yourself out from among so many bones. You know they buried a lot of us in the same ditch. It rained last night, and some of the boys lit out for dry land, and no doubt they will visit the old battlefield, and bring back some bones that belong to some of these boys. That poor fellow," pointing with his index finger to a skeleton not far away, "has not been able to talk on account of not finding his lower jaw—some of the boys from General Lee's burying ground were over not long ago, and they say he's prizing up hell with the Yankees. Well, we made a lot of them bite the ground. They are tented just over the hill, and we often swap visits and lies. Here comes a bunch of them now. I'll cut this tissue and take off this foot; it doesn't match the other, and maybe I can swap it off."

This squad of skeletons passed by and waded in the icy water to wash the dirt out of their joints; it made me shiver; then the bony fingers of the speaker shook me and said, "Get up."

I opened my eyes and saw that the clouds had blown by and the stars were shining, though it was still dark. I had slept on the grave of an unknown and used the headstone for a pillow. I was wet and cold, for the water had run under me. Pell had untied the horses and

was waiting to assist me to mount. The gray dawn of the morning was just driving away the night's darkness when an outpost picket said, "Halt, dismount, and give the countersign." When we had reached the crest of the hill I saw another city of tents, with its broad and clean-swept streets.

I saw soldiers marching and counter-marching. Pell's company was preparing for drill. He placed his arm around my neck and told me to take good care of mother until his return, and I then turned and rode through the picket line toward home.

It was a June morning, before the chickens had flown from their roost, when the fife and drum were heard, and then the soldiers' tread coming down the new-cut road that linked to the macadamized road which led up and over Cumberland Mountain. This was General Bragg's army, on the march south to Chattanooga.

The silverware and the tin box containing the roll of money went back to its former grave, and my shotgun went to Aunt Betsy's bed, its former hiding-place, for we knew we would soon be inside the Federal lines. After all our small valuables had been hidden, I perched myself on the top rail of an old rickety fence to watch the army pass by.

Some wore sad faces, others laughed. I

heard a youth say, "Dad, keep step," then a grum voice commanded, "Close up, file right," and on they went. A man with gray beard placed his hand on my head and said to me: "I hate to leave you, sonnie; but the General says go, and I must, but I'd rather fight it out here. Tell your mother good-by," then he was lost to sight. He was one of our nearest neighbors. The sun was sinking in the west when the last gun had glistened in the sunshine.

I went back into the house and found Pell and mother eating a scanty meal, and before they had finished we heard gunshots not far distant. Pell suddenly arose, shouldered his gun, and said it was the rear guard, holding in check the enemy. He then kissed mother and bade her good-by. Scarcely had he passed out of sight, when the rear guard swiftly passed, and close on them was the advance guard of General Rosecrans' army.

Soon there stood Yankee soldiers again at each door. One, wearing the insignia of lieutenant, addressing mother, said:

"Madam, we must search your house for Rebel soldiers."

"You will find them at the top of yonder mountain, and they will be glad to meet you," answered mother.

"This house must be searched," persisted the lieutenant. "We prefer, however, to have your

permission. I assure you my men will not destroy or carry away a penny's worth."

"With this assurance you have my permission," mother replied.

"Corporal, take the men and see that this house from the front door to the back keyhole is closely examined, for I have an opinion that there are Rebels here, and they are what I am after. Madam," said he, turning to mother, "this is an unpleasant job, but it is war, and orders must be obeyed."

While he stood waiting for his men to return, Uncle Huse came around the house and addressing the Yank, said, "Mister, has you seed Marse Ned?"

As the lieutenant stared at him without speaking, mother explained to the soldier how his young masters differed about the war, the death of their mother, his long wanderings, and the dark night he drifted into our house. While she spoke, tears filled this stalwart soldier's eyes, and he turned to Uncle Huse, saying:

"Uncle, would you know Ned if you were to see him?" Then a twinkle came into his eyes.

There was a broad smile on the little negro's face as he joyfully exclaimed: "Fo' sho' it's Marse Ned," and springing forward, he placed his arms around his young master's neck. When his tears ceased to flow he said, "Marse Ned, ef yo' had jest been a little sooner, yo' sho'

would have caught my old woman's Marse Pell, for he hadn't more'n got out'n sight when yo' got here."

"Perhaps he would have turned the tables on me, Unc. Maybe he would have captured me instead of me capturing him," replied the lieutenant.

"I don't know 'bout dat; dare wus a mighty lot of sojers what pass here, an' dey looks mighty mad."

"Well, did you see Marse Bob?" the soldier asked.

"No, sir, I didn't; I just looked for him all day," Uncle Huse replied.

"Well, he is down South somewhere," said the lieutenant, "and I will either capture him or he will capture me before this thing is over."

The soldiers filed out of the house, and made their report. "We must hurry on," said the lieutenant. "You must take good care of the lady that sheltered you, and fed you, and furnished you with a life companion. If we camp on this side of the mountain I'll come back to see you, and then I'll want to see your old woman. I'll bring brother Bob with me if I can catch him, so good-by."

"Bring my old woman's Marse Pell too," cried Uncle Huse.

That night came a hard rain, and with the rain came General Rosecrans' entire army.

They camped on the ground where General Bragg had thrown up his breastworks and also where General Buell had camped the year before. It rained incessantly, the lowlands overflowed, the small streams became rivers, and little Elk River was more than a mile wide, which was a very unfortunate thing for the people in that valley, for General Rosecrans' provision train failed to cross with the army, and the army must be fed on the resources of that valley, which was scarcely enough for the women and children.

The big army wagons came and carried away every bushel of corn, every bundle of hay and every pound of meat. Not a domestic fowl or beast was left, and when night came I crept to bed with nothing but water to satisfy my hunger. The next morning my breakfast was parched corn, taken from the cracks of the recently emptied cribs. For five days and nights our bill of fare was the same. The fruit of the trees had not yet ripened, nor had the growing berries in the fields.

During these days of fasting my lunches consisted of green apples and berries that were not yet red. These caused a corkscrew pain in my side, which had its compensations, for my mind was taken from considering my empty stomach and its attention centered there. My night dreams were tantalizing, for I saw tables laden

with sweet, juicy hams and cups overflowing with cold buttermilk, but when I reached for them they vanished. Over and over again through the long nights, feasts were spread before me, but not a drop or morsel was there to cool my swollen tongue. One evening, however, just at twilight, there came a courier from General Rosecrans, leaving a very welcome message. It was: "The provision wagons have arrived. Come to-morrow and get your daily rations."

It was a restless night for me, and it seemed as if day would never come. At the first gray streak of dawn I was on my way to the Yankee camp to draw my daily bread. It was a kind old man that filled my newly washed pillow-slip, and I went my homeward way rejoicing. I went the nearest way, across the fields of high grass. A ravenous appetite, coupled with a boy's curiosity, caused me to sit down and untie the string. The first thing that met my gaze was some large square crackers, the first I had ever eaten, and there has never been a Christmas cake since that day that tasted so good. Then pickles that tasted sweeter and better than the maple syrup of to-day, canned meats, coffee, and sugar. I ate a handful and then licked my fingers.

Now I thought I must hurry home, when I heard footsteps coming down the path. It was

a burly soldier with a red nose and a smutty, dirty face. My blood seemed to freeze in my veins. "Had to get the Yankees to feed you?" he asked. Then, looking over my supplies, he said, "I'll be damned if a Reb can have coffee with sugar in it around me," and so saying, he scooped it up and walked away. I cried, but the tears quickly dried, for anger took possession of me, and my thoughts were those of a demon. I wished for my gun, that I might bore a hole through his body large enough to reach in and tear his heart out by the roots. I could have cut his jugular vein, and seared the roots of his tongue with a red-hot iron. I wanted to cut his flesh from the bones and see him writhe under the pain.

He was now out of sight, so I packed my sack and hurried home, resolving not to tell mother of this burly fellow, and my misfortune, for the loss of the coffee might make her feel bad. I had heard her speak so often of coffee, and not a handful had been in our house for more than a year.

It was my daily occupation to go to General Rosecrans' commissary department and draw our rations. And I kept the main road. General Rosecrans was camped for a long rest. The old worn-out horses were turned out to graze on the grassy fields, and guards were stationed in the yards to keep out intruders.

Then came a surprising order, and that was that everybody should bring their guns, pistols, bowie knives, and all weapons of any description, and deliver them to General Rosecrans.

Mother said that I must give my gun to General Rosecrans, for he had been kind to us, and had given us bread when we had nothing to eat. His soldiers were now marching their beats to protect our house. The thought of giving up my gun and turning it over to a Yankee soldier was more than I could stand. I slowly went to Aunt Betsy's cabin and drew from under the bed the little shotgun. I kissed it and said to Aunt Betsy: "Mother wants me to give my gun to the Yankees, and I am not going to do it, but will have to lie to her about it, and I want you to swear by me."

"I'll sho' do it, honey," said she.

Out of the back door I went, down the path by the old well, and across the woodlot to the back fence, and there by the side of a big log I buried it and raked the leaves as if the wind had blown them there. When I returned to the house mother asked where my gun was. I replied: "I have burned the stock, buried the ashes, and thrown the barrel into the pond."

"He sho' did, old Miss," said Aunt Betsy.

Mother looked very doubtful, but I had said it, and Aunt Betsy had vouched for the truthfulness of my statement, and I would have

to wait for a more opportune time to make amends.

Scarcely a week had passed when the guards were withdrawn. Lieutenant Tarrant had made another visit to our house, and had made the acquaintance of Aunt Betsy, though she refused to shake hands with him, for the reason, she said, that he wore blue clothes. There were many horses, with the big letters U. S. branded on their shoulders, grazing in our field, and I thought it only just to appropriate one for my own use. The first was a deep bay, a fine saddler and swift of foot, but it was not my good fortune to keep him long, for the Yankees had a way of swapping—not the usual way, where it takes two to make a trade. I cared but little if I got the worst of the trade, for there were plenty more in the field. For nearly three months I roped General Rosecrans' horses and swapped with his soldiers. I had picked up a flea-bitten gray with a shaggy tail and without a mane, but fleet of foot. One morning I mounted to have a fox chase, and gave my horn a toot; the dogs answered with a bark, but old gray snorted, reared, and plunged.

I said to myself, "You haven't got a Yank on you this time, and you will find a fox chase is worse than running from Rebels." Through the fields and over the fences, across ditches, along with the lead dog old gray plunged. I

selected places to fall, but before I could make up my mind when to jump, that place was a hundred yards behind. So close I was now that the fox could be seen; he circled; Old Gray carried me out of the trail, but back again as soon as he could turn.

The chase was now ended, for the fox, by a clever jump, had gained the lower limb of a high tree, and was slowly working his way upward. With a makeshift bridle I tied the horse to a swinging limb and commenced to climb the tree, and when about half way up I heard the galloping of horses, and soon saw some Yankee soldiers coming. I crouched in the forks of the tree, for I never knew what class of soldiers I was going to meet.

As they approached, one of them said, "Them damn dogs have got something up that tree, and where is the rider of that horse?" They circled about, looking up, when one of them, noticing my foot, called out:

"Hold on, I see a foot of some kind; I'll take a shot at it."

Very much startled, I cried, "Don't shoot me."

The fellow laughed, and said to his comrades, "Damned if these dogs hain't treed a little toe-headed Reb."

I then told them that I had a fox higher up, and if they wouldn't shoot me, I would shake

him out. Telling me to go ahead, I began my climb again, saying:

“Look out; get the dogs ready; he is coming!”

Just then he made a leap on my head, down my back, and down the tree, and struck the ground twenty feet away. Pell-mell went the hounds, Old Gray with a Yankee on his back in the bunch. The bridle had broken, but he was staying with the dogs, and they were soon out of sight. I came down to find that there had been another horse swap, and I was so badly cheated that I hoofed it home. Sometime that night my dogs came home.

Lieutenant Tarrant had become a regular visitor at our house, and I now began to look upon the Yankees as not such bad men after all. I told him of the fox chase and Old Gray, and of the swap. He laughed and said that that was army regulations, but if I would go with him to camp he would try and find Old Gray, and he would give him back to me. I was glad of this chance, and we started off at once. When we had gotten well inside the lines, I suddenly came face to face with Grapevine Monke, who was hobbling along with a stick. My first impulse was to run and grab him by the hand, but a straight look from his deep-set eyes and a shake of the head warned me to go on.

We walked all through camp, looked through bunches of horses corraled under the trees, but failed to find Old Gray. We then went to General Rosecrans' headquarters. I stood outside while the lieutenant went in. In a short while he returned, saying he was sorry Old Gray could not be found, but General Rosecrans said that I could take the roan that was grazing in the woodlot in front of his tent. "He is a little lame," remarked the lieutenant, "but he will soon be over that, and I think that with him you can keep within hearing distance of the hounds." As I started to put the bridle on the roan, he called me back, saying: "The General said for you to keep this horse until he sent for him, and if he never sends, he is your horse." I was soon riding the roan homeward.

I told mother about meeting Grapevine Monke, and the look she gave me startled me. She asked if the lieutenant noticed my actions. "If he did," I replied, "he said nothing about it."

"If they ask you anything about Mr. Monke, you know nothing about him, excepting that he is an old man, and seems at times to be suffering from rheumatism," said mother.

A few days later Lieutenant Tarrant and some of his friends were sitting on our front porch, when Mr. and Mrs. Monke were seen coming down the road in the direction of our

house. Addressing my mother the lieutenant asked:

"What about this old man coming down the road? He has been seen in our camp several times. I saw your son start to speak to him the other day and suddenly go on. Sometimes he seems to suffer pain, and then acts as if he were crazy. I am at a loss to make him out."

"He is an old man," replied mother, "who fought in the Mexican War and was our blacksmith before this war began. The sight of soldiers at times seems to unbalance his mind. He has an idea that sleeping out helps his rheumatism. No doubt he visits your camp to find some Indian medicine that he used when in the Mexican War."

"I have doubted the sincerity of that pain, and I am going to test him," said the lieutenant.

When the old couple arrived and had been seated, the lieutenant said, addressing Mrs. Monke: "Your husband seems to have an acute attack of rheumatism."

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Monke, "at times it seems as though it would run him distracted."

"Yes, I have noticed it comes and goes very suddenly," said the lieutenant. "I have studied medicine a little. Let me examine you," getting up and walking over to where Mr. Monke sat.

"Ouch! don't bend that knee, Doc, it's powerful painful," exclaimed Monke.

"How about your arms and shoulders?" asked the lieutenant.

"Bad enough," said Mr. Monke.

"Don't you think a little whisky would loosen up your joints, set your tongue going, so then you could tell us something about some of the Rebel camps you have been sleeping in to catch the rheumatism?"

"No, sir; I kotch it in the Mexican War, and as for the whisky, if we had a little, the old woman could fix me some sarsaparilla and pokeroot, and maybe it would fetch me around all right. But we haven't any money, and like as not never will have; and I don't want the old woman to bury me while I am owing you a bottle of whisky."

"I'll make no charge," interrupted the lieutenant.

"No, thanks," said Mrs. Monke. "It might make the old man feel young and gay, and he would want to fight you."

"Well, I thought I would try and relieve a little suffering, so good-by. I hope you will get along all right, but I would advise you to stay out of our camp, for innocent people like you sometimes get themselves into trouble by knowing too much."

After he was gone Grapevine Monke said:

"That chap knows too much about rheumatism to suit me, so I'll climb the mountain to-night."

I had passed and repassed soldiers, and for some reason there was no more swapping of horses. The time had come for General Rosecrans to move South. The loose horses were being gathered up and taken to camp, and not one was left except my roan. I never knew whether it was an oversight or General Rosecrans' order that this horse should be left with me. The morning that the army was to move South I went and sat on a rail fence and watched the soldiers go by just as I had done the day I sat on a rail fence and saw General Bragg's army travel the same road. It is a thrilling sight to see an army move, and as I sat and watched the cavalry, the artillery, and infantry move in systematic order, I would have gladly joined them, for the grandeur of the scene made me forget that this force was going South to do battle against my brothers, my relatives, and my friends. All day I sat and watched the moving columns as the boy of to-day does a circus, taking no heed of the time. When the glinting sunlight shone on the last gun, and the rear guard was out of sight, I began to think of the time of day, and looking at the sun, saw that it was low and red in the west, so climbing off the fence, I sadly wended my way homeward.

CHAPTER XIII

GENERAL ROSECRANS' army was now over the mountain and out of our sight. There was a sort of sorrow among the people, who had fed the army and in return had been fed by the army. Not sad because they would look upon tented fields no more, or view the glare and glitter of cavalrymen as they rode to and fro; or indeed that they did not wish to return to their quiet and peaceful home life. But they were sad because they had seen the big cannon roll southward over the rocky mountains, to hurl their deadly missiles against the breasts of their sons, who stood in line of battle near Chattanooga, not far from the foot of the mountain on the other side. Yes, and sad because there was not an ear of corn, or a ton of hay, not a fowl in the barnyard, nor a domestic beast in the fields, and because the fields were laid bare. The chilly blasts of winter would soon be on, and we owned no winter clothing to take the place of our summer suits.

The fierce fire of common suffering had welded the people in to brotherhood and sisterhood. They were no longer divided by class distinction, but joined hands and hearts in one

common cause, to provide in some way the necessities of life. What there was to sustain life was held in common and gathered and distributed among the most needy.

The berries of the fields had ripened and fallen from the bushes; the apples had mellowed on the limbs, the hull of the walnut had dried and fallen off. These were all gathered and stored away, as a squirrel lays up his winter supply. The low river bottom lands were hunted for stray cattle or hogs that might have drifted there for food and escaped the ever-rummaging army corps.

In out-of-the-way places some people had a few fowls left; others had a little meat and a few bushels of corn. These were brought together and divided as those in charge thought best. I had again loaded a wagon with ammunition from the deserted camp, with the view of contributing my share of meat with my gun, and again ran down the path and followed the same trail that led to where I had hidden my treasured weapon.

There was the old log; the leaves were so high I could hardly see it. With my bare hands I raked and scraped them away, and deeper still until the stock and then the barrel of my gun was in sight. As I dug and scratched I wondered what mother would say when she saw the gun and knew that I had lied to her.

But alas! the lock refused to work, the stock was eaten by worms, the barrel pitted by rust. I folded it in my arms and pressed it to my breast, as a girl would do with her baby doll. I felt the hot tears run down my cheeks, and while I cried, a crow sailed over me and lit on a limb not far away. Its calls were tantalizing. I arose, and with my hand I sent a missile at him, but it missed the mark and the bird flew away. Its taunting squeaks dried my tears, and I slowly replaced the rusty gun and covered it as before.

I journeyed home with only one comforting thought, and that was that I wouldn't have to apologize for telling a lie. In the absence of a gun I had a well-trained pack of hounds, and when once on the trail they were sure to bag the game. But what use is game without salt, for there was not enough in the valley to salt a jaybird. Necessity, however, always finds a way, and through the brain of some person that way is brought into use. It was Uncle Huse that made the hoppers and filled them with the dirt from the floor of the long-used smoke-house, and soaked them with water, taking the drippings and boiling them—and the sediment was salt!

One morning, as we sat in the twilight, mother turned to me and said: "Let us go and dig up the money that's been so long buried.

We can use it now, for I have heard of a land of plenty."

Straight we went to the very spot, and found the box just as we had left it. But lo, when the money was taken out the rolls were nothing but white sheets of paper. The dampness had extracted the inkwork coloring and the money was valueless. When we had returned to the house, mother sent for Uncle Huse and said to him:

"Have the horses ready, Houston, when the seven stars point to the hour of three in the morning, for it is a long and rough way, and we must have an early start."

The next morning, before the sun rose over the top of the Cumberland Mountain, we were far on our way to the land of plenty. We kept the main road for many miles, and then turned to the right and followed a winding path along the mountainside, climbing higher and higher. When we had reached the summit, I looked for the first time on Padlock Cove. It was the shape of a horseshoe, with the opening to the south. Nature has done much for this wonderful spot, the high mountains to the north shutting out the winter blasts, the east mountain the cold, chilly east wind, the west the hot burning sun, and the opening to the south lets in the soft summer breeze, to fan the cheeks of the happy and contented people that dwelt in the shoe. The fruit trees in this valley always pro-

duced an abundance of fruit. As I looked down upon this wonderful land, some of the leaves of the trees were yet green, and others of a golden hue, for the frosty air had kissed away its summer green. We followed the winding path down, and on either side the gray and fox squirrels were playing hide and seek. As our horses were carefully feeling their way around a big boulder, a small squirrel ran up a tree, and seated itself in the fork, and chattered defiance. I quickly slid from my horse's back, and threw a rock, and the squirrel fell dead. Farther on, as we were crossing a small mountain stream, mother's horse stumbled and fell. She jumped in time to keep from being caught under the horse as it rolled over.

With my assistance she mounted again with no bruises excepting a slightly sprained ankle. As we neared the bottom of the hill we found it to be the home of the pine and aspen. Here the sun-flowers grew tall, and the aster was still in bloom.

We came to another branch, and here we let our horses drink. Just a little farther down the ducks were taking a bath in nature's basin. Up another hill, among the tall pines, was a house, and we followed the path that led to it. As we approached the gate a tall woman with fair complexion, blue eyes, her hair hanging loosely down her back, met us, and said:

"You 'uns are from the other side of the mountain, ain't you?"

"Yes, madam," said mother.

"Well, ain't they done fighting over thar yet? My old man's been gone mor'n two years, and he said, when he left, he was gwine to stay until he killed every one of those Yankees—and he is just the creeter that will do it, for he can shoot better than anybody."

"To what company does your husband belong?" queried mother.

"Oh, he went with Mr. Rutledge."

"Rutledge?" said mother.

"Yes, ma'am," she replied.

"Can you tell me how far it is to the Rutledge place?" inquired mother.

"Yes, ma'am, it's no more'n a mile or two the way the crow flies, but more than that the way you have to go."

"Well, give me the directions, please," said mother.

"You don't need any directions," she answered, "just go," and she stopped and counted five on her fingers, and added, "just go until you cross five creeks, and you are there."

We traveled as directed, and when we had come to the fifth branch, to our left was an emerald pool. It reflected the colors that surrounded it, the rays of the sun and the clouds.

There were some children playing on the banks, and among them a girl of about my age.

A large house stood back among the trees, and mother asked the girl who lived there.

"My mother," returned the girl; "if you want to see her, I will go with you."

The big gate swung open and we rode up to the stile. Mrs. Rutledge met us. After the usual introductions were gone through with, we assisted mother into the house, for her ankle was swollen considerably and it was very painful for her to try to walk. It was twilight in the valley, for the sun had sunk behind the high mountaintops.

Mrs. Rutledge called her daughter to her and said, "Irene, take the little man and show him the horses and fowls, and everything about the place."

I had never met such a beautiful girl in all my life; she had dark, dreamy eyes, rosy cheeks, a lovely, radiant face, and when my eyes caught hers I was strangely affected. We went out to the cowlot, the barn, the hogpen and through the woodlot, where the sheep were grazing. I was paying but little attention to where I was going, or what I was going to see, for my mind and my eyes were on the girl, when suddenly I received a jolt from behind that sent me headlong to the ground. In my effort to rise I received another; then I perceived that a big-

horned ram had objected to my going through the pasture, and had taken advantage of me while I was feasting my eyes on the beautiful girl. I managed, somehow, to escape the next jolt and made good my escape.

I found Irene behind the fence, laughing. She apologized for not telling me that the ram would butt.

After supper Mrs. Rutledge bathed mother's ankle with liniment, while Irene played an organ, showed me picture-books, albums and daguerreotype pictures, and called my special attention to a picture of a handsome youth, and told me of many wonderful things he could do, and said that if the sheep had butted him, he wouldn't have run off as I did. I began to hate that boy, and wished I could catch him on my side of the mountain. It was now bedtime and as we all needed a good night's sleep, I went to bed, but it was a restless night, for I was worrying over that boy in my dreams.

We were up early the next morning. Mother was not able to help shuck and shell the corn that she had bargained for, and it was left to Irene and me. We ran a corn-shucking race, counting the red ears ten, the striped ears five, and the yellow ones one. Often I would snatch an ear from her—not that I cared particularly about that ear, or because it was red and counted more in the race, but merely as an excuse

to touch her beautifully shaped hands. When the sun was high we had shucked and shelled a turn of corn, and mother and I were ready to return home. My horse was brought alongside of the barn door, for Irene and I combined were not strong enough to put the turn of corn upon the horse's back, and we conceived the idea of leading him alongside of the door, for it was high, about even with his back, and by pushing it over, it would fall upon his back, evenly divided, but our plan failed and the sack fell to the ground. I was puzzled, and Irene laughed. I upbraided myself because I was not a man to show my strength in the presence of this girl.

"Here comes Sartain Hop," said Irene.

I looked and saw that it was the same youth whose picture had haunted me through the night. My blood boiled. He was a year or two older than I, and larger, but I resolved to strike him down when he came within my reach, but when he spoke his soft voice cooled my anger.

He said, "Irene, you and your friend take that end of the sack, and I'll take this end, and we will swing it into the crib, and from there we will adjust it to the horse's back." His musical voice and pleasant manners softened me enough to say "Thank you," when the sack was well settled on the horse's back.

Mother was now ready, and we were obliged to hurry away, for we had to get beyond the mountains before dark. As I rode home that night I could not get my mind off the girl, nor could I smother out the jealous feeling for that handsome youth, but little did he or I know the responsible duty that awaited him, nor little did we know of the troubles that would soon bind us in ties of brotherhood.

CHAPTER XIV

BACK home again, mother had made arrangements for our side of the mountain to get corn from Padlock Cove. They had plenty, for neither army had marched across the mountain; not even a lone soldier had ridden within the Shoe since the war began. With these happy arrangements our troubles were not yet over, for there were no mills to grind the corn into meal. Where the mill once stood there was nothing to mark the place excepting some charred and blackened posts, and the kind old miller had gone in search of another occupation.

From out of the depths of Uncle Huse's fertile brain a crude mill was devised. A block from the trunk of a tree was taken, in one end a basin was cut, while a long pole was suspended from the limb of a large oak, the lower end of which was rounding like a chemist's pestle. A panful of corn poured into the basin and pounded with the butt end of the pole, made a fair quality of meal, and from this our large and delicious pones of bread were made.

My hunting was now an occupation for gain, and not for pleasure, for from this source I must supply our table with meat. Sometimes with Uncle Huse as a companion, but often

alone, I tramped, during the long hours of the night, with my hounds trailing and chasing the wild animals that fed at night.

One night I had gone a long way from home among the hills and valleys of a thinly settled neighborhood, more for a change than anything else, for game was plentiful near home. It was the thirteenth of the month—an unlucky night according to Uncle Huse—that I rode away on my U. S. horse, the same horse that was given to me by General Rosecrans. I tied an old quilt on my horse's back and put a piece of corn-bread in my pocket, for I knew not when I might get back. In spite of being accustomed to traveling at night, I could not overcome the memory of a story I had heard from the lips of Aunt Betsy in which figured old raw bones and bloody head, and oftentimes I would see things that would make my crownless hat move on my head and my hair stand on end, and I would put whip to my old roan and fairly split the wind until I was safely out of reach. On this particular night the stars were hidden behind the clouds, which grew thicker and blacker, as the thunder began to rumble. My dogs came to me, and this was token that I should seek shelter, for a terrible storm was brewing. I urged my horse along the rough and gloomy road, and soon came to a log house. I stopped at the front door and gave a rap with the butt

end of my riding-whip, but no answer came from within; I slid off my horse, threw the reins over the wooden hinges, pushed open the door and threw my bedquilt in with the hope that if anybody was there he would answer, or if a ghost only was there that it would go out through the roof. I heard no sound but the big drops of rain that were beginning to fall. I nerved myself sufficiently to step on the inside, and drew from my pocket my knife, flint and punk. At the first stroke there was a great commotion up above the rafters, for the owls and bats were flying to and fro trying to find some way of escape. The spark fell on the touchwood and ignited, and soon I had a big blazing fire. I called my dogs on the inside and they lay coiled in front of the fireplace.

I carefully examined every nook and corner. The house was very old and its interior appearance would indicate that it had not been occupied since the war began. There were big open cracks in the ceiling, but my eyes could not penetrate the darkness above. On the outside, the flashes of lightning left inky darkness, and soon it began to rain in torrents. I made my dogs move sufficiently to give me room for my quilt, then stretching myself out I used one of them for a pillow. I closed my eyes, my muscles relaxed, and I fell asleep. I awoke suddenly. I had not slept long, for the fire had

changed but little. I looked about and noticed that one dog had raised his head and seemed to be listening. I lay there with my head in my hands, wondering what could have given me such a shock, for surely if anybody or anything had come near or made any noise the dogs would raise an alarm. It was useless to try to go to sleep. I heard now a sound that startled me, and I rose to go and find out the cause, but before I reached the door a voice said, "You are mine."

My body shook with fright; I could not tell whence it came. My dogs raised their heads and gave me a puzzled look. I couldn't be fooled this time, for somebody, or some spirit was near, and I relied on my dogs, and said, "Look for him, boys." Every dog was on his feet in an instant, trailing around the room and sticking his nose in every crack and crevice and then they gave me another puzzled look. I was now satisfied that no human being or wild animal inhabited the place, for my dogs never showed signs of fright at the approach of man or beast at any of my former campfires.

I slipped the reins off the old wooden hinge and stood with them in my hands, while I hissed the dogs on. They made the circle around the room and stared at me again, much to my discomfort, then again the voice said, "You are mine." The dogs rushed to the fire and barked

fiercely, as if the words were coming from the back log of that hot, blazing fire. With one leap I straddled the back of my horse, and through the driving rain I was going I knew not where. All night it rained, and all night I rode, and when daylight came I knew not where I was nor the way home. I then realized how cowardly I was, and in how cowardly a manner I had run away, leaving my dogs to fight an invisible something—I knew not what—that had claimed me for a victim. I upbraided myself and felt that I ought to get on my knees to my dogs and beg their pardon. Would they drop their tails and scorn me on my return home? These were the thoughts that went through my brain as I rode through the woods watching for the moss on the north side of the tree, in order that I might get my bearings home. It was late in the evening when I got home; my dogs were there and ran to meet me, licking my hands, and in dog language said, "We are glad you made good your escape."

I never told mother of my cowardly act, neither did I recover my blanket, but told mother that I lost it. And it was many years after the war before I learned that it was a crazy person crouched above the ceiling who had uttered those weird words.

A great pestilence now broke out, which was known as the army itch. I was a victim, and was

a mass of sores from head to foot. Many remedies were tried, but all failed until I was fairly soaked with sulphur, and for five long weeks mother kept me shut up in the house, for someone had said that if I got wet it would "strike in," and I would be paralyzed for the rest of my life.

While I lay in my affliction Grapevine Monke came home and told mother that brother Wilton was exchanged and back with Lee in Virginia; that the great battle of Chickamauga had been fought, and brother Pell was reported to have been mortally wounded and left on the battlefield. The Federals had suffered great losses, and before the year closed they would be captured or marching North with only a remnant of an army. With his charts and maps, he explained the situation of the Federal army in Virginia, how easy it was going to be to capture and destroy them.

He also showed how Rosecrans was hemmed in and would have to surrender or cut his way out at a great sacrifice. His stay was short, but he promised to be back at Christmas time, and bring a true report of brother Pell.

I had by this time recovered and by dint of soaking and scrubbing, had gotten all the sulphur off me, excepting the smell, which lasted almost until the end of the war.

My dogs had been well trained, and I had

the old smoke-house groaning under the weight of wild game for the Christmas dinner. Aunt Betsy prepared the meal, but it was not the old-time dinner, for there was sorrow in every household, and many of our neighbors had husbands and sons killed, while others lay wounded in some prison. We knew not just what was taking place over the mountain, except what Grapevine Monke had told us. Through him mother learned that brother Pell had been taken off the field of battle with an ugly wound in his hip, and carried to Atlanta, and was being nursed by Uncle Bill, our negro overseer.

The new year, 1864, had come, and we had to patch up the old harness, pile and burn the brush, and do the plowing preparatory to putting in the next crop.

With an early spring the trees had begun to bud, and one warm day, just the day for fish to bite, I looked up my last year's fishing box. Then I remembered that I had but one hook left. However, Uncle Huse was going along also, and bought hooks and lines were of no use to him, for he was an expert at the art of grabbling. The water was just right, as I put a wriggling worm on my hook and cast it near some brush. It got fastened and of course I had to go after it, for it was the only one I had. I stripped off my trousers and shirt, and swam in to untangle it. I cast a little farther down

stream next time and a five-pound bass snapped the line, and my hook was gone. I stood speechless, lamenting my fate, a penniless boy, when Uncle Huse called, and held high a large-mouthed bass.

I went to his side and he gently raked away the driftwood, underneath which there were dozens of lazy bass and black perch. "Now watch me," said Uncle Huse, "and I'll show you how to grabble fish." Slowly his hand went down among the fish. "Look," said he, "I am going to yank out de larges'."

With the tips of his fingers he gently touched the fish's tail; scratching it a little, he moved his fingers slowly along the fish's side. "See," said he, "how he enjoys having his sides scratched. Now watch when my hand pass de fins on his back; I'll make a quick grab, and before he has time to think I'll have him in de air." I watched his hand slide along the fish's side; I also watched the fish fan his tail enough to lay heavily against the hand. Suddenly a splash, the water foamed and the fish was out of the water, and on the string. While we stood waiting for the other fish to get over their fright a snake swam near by, and stopped and crooked its neck. Quick as a flash Uncle Huse caught it by the tail and gave a quick jerk, and off went its head.

"Excuse me, Uncle Huse," said I, "there are

two things I cannot do—grabble fish and pop a snake's head off by a jerk of the tail, and I am going to get out of this cold water."

Uncle Huse went from log to log along down the stream, and at short intervals would catch and string a large bass or perch. I climbed the bank and sat down by the side of a tree, and wished I was a man, a negro man, that could catch fish and pop snakes' heads off.

The sun was shining through the open tree-tops, I felt the warm rays on my naked chest, and stretched my legs out and fell into a deep sleep. I know not how long I slept, but was awakened by little claws tickling my chest, sometimes my nose; and then my toes. I raised my head just in time to see a small squirrel jump off my feet and run up a tree. I rubbed my eyes, yawned, and strolled along the bank of the creek in the direction I had seen Uncle Huse go. I followed the path that led around the trees that stood along the bank and came to a sink hole, or whirlpool, that separated itself from the river by six feet of earth. The roots of the limbless trunk of an old dead tree had slid into the river and broken about half way, the top of which pointed to the center of the suck hole, which was about twenty feet in diameter and seemed to be about half full of water. I had always been told it had no bottom, and I to this day have no grounds for

doubting this assertion. The falling and breaking of the tree formed an acute angle, the sharp point upward.

Following the path it was necessary to climb this angle, which I carelessly did; then my feet slipped and I slid feet foremost into the suck hole. When I rose to the surface of the water, I found I was completely walled in, with no possible way of extricating myself, and so I would have to wait for assistance. I swam to the dirt wall and clung to some roots and then holloed, but my voice seemed to go straight up. Then the thought struck me that I could not be heard if anyone should follow the path. I then reasoned with myself. Uncle Huse would have to come back this way, and he would find me; if he had gone some other way home mother would send him back after me. I might have to stay until night or even away into the night, or it might be that I might not be found until the rising of the sun. What should I care? I could swim, and could rest by holding onto the roots that protruded through the walls of my cage.

I tried to reason out the pleasant side of my perilous predicament, when I looked across to the opposite side of the pool and saw a monster snake coiled on a chunk of wood. My nerves gave way and I slowly slid into the water. I soon rose, and nerved myself to renew

my hold. The outgoing of the water caused the continuous circling, and I saw that if the snake should be satisfied to stay and sleep, I would have to move or get tangled up with him.

Should night come, I could not see. What a horrible thought! I must act, I must frail him to death; but what did I have to frail him with? I would seize him by the throat, and squeeze him to death. No, for then he would coil his big body around mine and I would be squeezed to death. My brain began to whirl and I felt as if I was going around the pool. I then heard talking, but I could not tell where it was. I must have uttered some sound, for a negro saw me and told me to hold fast while he ran and got his plow line. He made a noose, and I slipped my head and arms into it and was drawn out and taken home.

CHAPTER XV

ONE day shortly after this adventure, Grapevine Monke appeared suddenly at our house, and after informing mother that brother Pell was well of his wound and back in the ranks, disappeared as mysteriously as he came.

The summer months were now approaching; the warm rays of the sun made the crickets call from the hedges, while the croaking of the bullfrogs and the swelling of the buds on the trees were further proofs of the coming of summer. It was planting time, and I was to assist Uncle Huse in planting and cultivating the crop.

Then there drifted into our neighborhood a Miss Strickling—a tall, red-headed, freckled-faced woman of about forty years. She represented herself Southern born, but recently from the North. She knew how to economize in cooking, how to save the scraps by working them over into new and palatable dishes, and was desirous of proving her skill in our kitchen, whereupon Aunt Betsy said to mother:

“You had better take dat turkey-egg gal ’way fum heah, for I ain’t gwine to hab my cookin’ sp’ilt.”

Miss Strickling was, however, very handy with the needle. She taught the girls how to change their old and out-of-date clothes into the very latest styles, and how to select colors that would harmonize. She taught them also the art of making hats out of plaited straw, and generally improved their wardrobes through her skill in making the most out of little things.

One of the enterprises that she spoke of establishing were a day school and a Sunday school. I well knew that if these schools should be opened it would stop my fishing and hunting on week days, and diving and ducking on Sundays, so I sought the aid of Aunt Betsy, and we agreed that we had better send the Yankee woman away. Mother overruled our protest, however, and the sad news was conveyed to me that the Sunday school would have its opening session on the following Sunday.

To some it was their first entry into Sunday school. The older children had perhaps forgotten what book was used in a Sunday school, for it had been more than three years since the oldest of them had had a chance to receive the instruction that such an institution affords.

The entire school district turned out on opening day, boys, girls, and the old people as well. Bill Jenkins, a youth of twelve, but larger than some of the others who were two or three

years older than himself, had taken his seat on the front bench. Bill's father was killed in the battle of Shiloh, and since then his mother almost kept him tied to her apron strings.

Bill, like the rest of us, could neither read nor write, and could not believe some things that seemed impossible to him, and he did not mind telling what he believed—or disbelieved.

Miss Strickling began to read from the Bible, where four thousand men, not counting the women and children, were fed with five loaves of bread and two little fishes.

"Golly, what a whopper!" said Bill.

The children laughed; even our stuttering preacher laughed. But Miss Strickling, undisturbed, calmly remarked:

"Sonny, that was in the days of miracles."

"Gosh!" ventured Bill; "I wish it had been in the days when the Yankees were here."

This brought another laugh from the children, but again Miss Strickling failed to show annoyance as she said: "The Allwise One will take care of us."

"Yes, ma'am," returned Bill, "but I'll bet you that feller had more fish hid out somewhere."

Miss Strickling read from another chapter, but she could not get Bill's mind off the fish story, so she dismissed us with instructions to be back on the following Sunday.

On Monday morning the day school opened. The old log schoolhouse had been chinked and daubed, the windows nailed down, and the old stick chimney rebuilt. The opening day was devoted to the study of geography from a large map. Miss Strickling pointed out the Northern States, the Mason and Dixon Line, and where all the battles had been fought up to this time. She was gaining the confidence of the children very rapidly, but for one wrong move the tide went against her. She began to make comparisons between us and the little Yankee boys. She told how the Yankee boys could read, spell and cipher, and that they always came to school with clean hands and faces.

The feeling immediately ran high against the Yankee boys, although we had never seen one of them. We decided to do just the opposite of what they did. If they had clean hands and faces we wanted dirty ones; if they could read, we did not want to know a letter in the book. Day by day, week by week, the bitter feeling increased. Word was passed from boy to boy, from group to group, to meet at sundown, where the path crossed the branch that lazily runs through the meadow.

At the appointed hour they were all there, and piled abuses, thick and fast, on the head of our teacher.

Knowing my mother's love and kindly feel-

ing for Miss Strickling, I did not care to take the lead or even enter into the conversation, but deep in my heart I indorsed everything that was said. The meeting adjourned without any definite plan being formulated of ridding the country of this obnoxious creature—obnoxious, that is, in the eyes of the boys.

But as those who are looking and watching for an opportunity to make mischief will soon find it, so was it with us. It was a cold day for the season, and the sudden change in the temperature had chilled the little sparrows, and they could not fly, but only flutter along the ground. It was great fun to pick them up, blow our warm breath on them, bring back their strength again, and see them fly away. Boys never do things by halves, and so we filled our pockets with the little birds. The bell rang, calling us into school. The door was closed and the windows drawn down to keep out the cold air. The fire was burning in the big fireplace, which soon warmed up the atmosphere. The little birds began to flutter and fly from the pockets and from the plackets of the boys' shirts, which caused great merriment.

This displeased Miss Strickling, and she landed on Bill Jenkins. Then books began to fly, and for a time the greatest confusion ensued. The last I saw of Miss Strickling she

was making her way to the door shielding her head from flying books with her arms.

Our teacher was gone, and a happy lot of children wended their way homeward. Aunt Betsy rejoiced that the school was closed, and the Yankee woman run out of the country. I returned to my happy occupation of hunting. Mother was absorbed in serious thoughts of the Southern army and men, especially her two sons, Pell and Wilton, and this inattention to me left me in a position to do about as I liked.

One morning, long before daylight, I was awakened by the bursting open of the back door by Aunt Betsy. She was much excited, and had come to relate a vision to mother. Aunt Betsy had been troubled a great deal by scary dreams, but mother's interpretation of omens of good had always sent her to bed or to work in a happy mood. On this occasion, however, she could not be reconciled. She had seen, as she said, "Dat trifling, mean George Huxly prowling 'bout our house, en he was sho' gwine to do some devilment." Mother tried to pacify her by telling her that George perhaps had joined the Yankee army, but no doubt he would come home with honors as a brave soldier. Aunt Betsy's nerves were at too high a pitch for sleep and we sat waiting for daylight.

Then a strange thing happened. When it

was light enough to see, a poor jaded horse stood at our front gate. From certain marks there was no doubt in our minds that it was the same horse that was stolen from our stable more than two years before.

Coupling this fact with Aunt Betsy's dream, mother began to believe that George Huxly was in the neighborhood. A few nights later a man was found murdered on Penile Hill, and there was left no clue to the assassin. A few days later some drunken men rode the highways, dressed in Federal uniform, shouting and shooting recklessly. Who they were was only speculation, but we did know that they were but few in number and had pitched their camp in the bend at the foot of the mountain. This drunken band of robbers rode daily through the valley, frightening the women away from their homes, and then they would retreat to their camp at night and sleep off their drunken stupor.

Brother Oakes called some of his flock to the log schoolhouse to offer prayers for the return of some regularly organized army, if not Confederate, Federals would be acceptable. While the good preacher was offering his petition, this drunken crowd passed and fired at the building, but their unsteady nerves caused them to miss the mark.

One night mother and I sat quietly in our

living room, our only light that of a tallow candle, mother no doubt thinking of the ruffians. I was in a reminiscent mood, going over in my mind the coon and fox chases I had so enjoyed, when we heard the sound of galloping horses coming toward the house. The gate was opened, and now the clanking of the riders' sabres as they struck the gravel walk was plainly heard. On they came, until they got to the front porch, when a deep voice called.

Mother opened the door and inquired what was wanted.

A burly fellow, dressed in uniform, said to her:

"Madam, I am informed that you have a horse in your stable lot that belongs to my company."

"There is a horse in the stable," replied mother. "From certain marks nature stamped on him, I am certain that it is the same horse that was stolen from us more than two years ago."

"Soldiers do not steal," said the man with the gruff voice; "they take what they want and call it pressing into service."

"You are perfectly at liberty to take him," said mother, "for he is poor, and besides is a cripple and of no use to me."

"I have already dispatched men after him," said he. "But I have another duty to perform,

which might be painful to those less accustomed to such work, but to me it is a pleasure, and that is that this house must be searched for Rebel deserters. Remember, madam, that if any attempt is made to resist arrest, you will be first to meet death. Corporal, do your duty!"

Then two men entered; one wore a mask, but both were clad in blue uniforms.

"Get them a light," said the deep voice, "and send the boy with them, and I'll stand guard over you, provided you remember what I said."

I was ushered along through the lower rooms and then upstairs. The two men carelessly looked about, but took nothing until they found a roll of cloth Aunt Betsy had woven.

Just as we entered mother's room on our return, Aunt Betsy having heard the loud talking, came in and seeing the intruders, turned to the leader and said:

"You are not a Yankee soldier! I know you, George Huxly."

Then, jerking the mask from his face, Aunt Betsy, seeing she had guessed aright, attempted to take the roll of cloth away from him, when he struck her a hard blow on the head with his gun, then turned on mother and with a blow from his fist which felled her to her knees, just as I went headlong from a blow from behind.

When I recovered and arose they were gone, and mother was washing an ugly wound on the side of Aunt Betsy's head.

"I allers told you, Old Miss, dat's a mean boy," said Aunt Betsy to mother.

CHAPTER XVI

THE next morning when I awoke I was one night older, and a thousandth part of a hair-breadth larger, but in thought and action I was ten years older. I now felt that I was mother's protector, when the night before I felt that she was mine.

Silently I swore vengeance on George Huxly, and with deep and serious thought, planned and replanned to get even. While in this deep and serious mood Sartain Hop was seen coming. That mean jealous hatred vanished from me, and in its place arose strong ties of friendship, for I read in his face that his mission was to help drive these denizens of the hills from off the face of the earth. When we were alone he said to me:

"I heard of your trouble with these ruffians, and with you and the other boys I know, that have muscles of iron and bravery that knows no fear, we will plan for further action. Just a fortnight from to-day we will meet at the old barn in Padlock Cove. Keep the secret in your own breast, I beg of you. Will you be there?" he asked.

"I will," I answered.

On the day I was to go I evaded telling my mother what my mission was, and on my arrival at the rendezvous I found Hop and his ten comrades already there. The sun had gone behind the western mountains, and there were several hours of twilight before us. Before darkness set in we repaired to the trunk of a large pine, to the right of the garden gate. There I met again that beautiful girl Irene. It was the first time I had seen her since I rode away with the sack of corn. She seemed more beautiful than ever, and my love for her was stronger, but a different kind of love, for this time when I grasped her hand and gazed into her eyes I read nothing but real and deep friendship.

We formed a circle, with Irene in the center. Then Hop addressed us in this manner:

"We are now about to enter on a hazardous expedition; it may mean death to some of us, perhaps to all of us. I have prepared a club for each of us, which we must use, for we haven't any guns. I have discovered that there are thirteen of those ruffians—one more than our number. We will catch them to-night in a drunken stupor, and slip upon them, and each must make sure of his stroke, for one blow on the head of each will benumb their senses and then there will be twelve against one. If one of us should falter it would spoil the plan, and

to make sure that we have nerves of steel, Irene will administer an oath which I have prepared, which if once taken there will be no backdown. All who agree say 'Aye.' "

A more binding oath was never administered. As I repeated the words after that mountain girl, my hair stood on end, for the punishment I had asked the Almighty Providence to inflict on me should I waver was fearful in the extreme, and at one time a lump came in my throat. When she stopped reading she asked:

"What is your answer?"

I replied, with a trembling voice, "I do."

"You will now kiss the little Bible which I hold in my hand," she said.

We hurriedly made ready for our night's work, for we had some distance to travel. As we made the bend in the road, that sweet mountain girl kissed her hand and waved a goodbye. The road ran through the woods, and was one I had traveled many a time before when my dogs were in hot pursuit of a fox. We were under strict orders not to speak above a whisper, and were told to guide the horses if possible in the soft part of the road.

When we had come in close proximity to the camp of these desperate men, Hop and I slid off our horses and gave the reins to our companions while we reconnoitered. We crept on

our hands and knees nearly a quarter of a mile, and there found these ruffians lounging and smoking their pipes. One of their horses whinnied, and this brought George Huxly to his feet. We heard him say:

"Boys, that horse smells sulphur; you had better patrol the camp."

Two of them came near us, and we heard one of them say, "Cap seems a little nervous to-night."

"Yes," said the other; "old red eye has given out; but we will fix him to-morrow, for I will pull in a drayload."

They returned to the fire and again puffed at their pipes.

Hop softly said to me, "It won't do; crawl back to the horses."

When we had reached them Hop addressed the band:

"I order you to disband for the night. Meet me at the log schoolhouse the fourth night from to-night; keep fresh in your mind your obligations and our plans within your breast."

Disappointed, we separated and returned to our homes, fully resolved, however, to be at the meeting place again the night our leader had selected.

The intervening time passed slowly, but at last the days had gone by and at the appointed hour we stood in the darkness of the old school-

house. I struck my flint with my barlow knife and carefully examined the premises to make sure no one was there. Then sentinels were placed on guard to make doubly sure that no one save our little band would know our plans. We quietly listened to a new plan that Hop, our captain, had figured out. He said:

"General Wheeler is operating in Lincoln County, just south of us, and we will make our way to him and get guns, ammunition and assistance, and return, although there is a very serious and dangerous obstacle in the way. The Yankees are guarding the railroad very closely, but I have discovered an old and unused road which we can travel, and I don't think the place where this road crosses is guarded, so I have planned to make the attempt. What say you?"

With one voice we all answered, "Yes!"

"Very well! Ride leisurely along," said Hop, "so as not to arouse suspicion, nor must you engage in loud conversation. Now we must be off."

As I went out of the door of the old school-house, I glanced back at the outline of the benches and my heart sank. I felt faint; my thoughts were boy thoughts, for I wanted to go home, but the terrible oath seemed outlined in fire before my vision. I felt hot tears run down my cheeks, and something dragged me toward my U. S. horse, as I longed to go home.

Then I heard Hop urge one of the others to rein his horse into line, and I swung myself on the back of the roan and took up the march southward. I fought hard to keep my thoughts off home and mother, and thought what a big man I would be with a gun and firing at George Huxly.

There were no clouds, but the stars did not seem to shine brightly. There were no lights in any of the houses that we passed; there was not wind enough to move the leaves on the trees. The stillness seemed deathly, and there was not a sound save the beating of hoofs on the hard-baked ground. From my knowledge of marking time by the stars, I judged it to be one o'clock, when Hop stopped and waited for all to come up.

"Now," said he, "just beyond this hill is the railroad, and we must cross in single file. I'll go first; if nothing befalls me each one may follow. A mile south at a big spring we will let our horses drink and we will take a little rest. Keep your obligations before you." And he rode away into the darkness alone.

It was my turn next, and I sat waiting for Hop to get safely over. Just then a shot rang out and a horse came running toward us swiftly; then we saw the rider fall and the horse plunged among us. We then discovered that it was our captain. I sprang from my

horse and ran to him. Grasping his hand and lifting his head, I found that he had been killed. I asked two to volunteer to watch the body while the others went after a conveyance to carry it home. We carried the body to a clump of trees and waited through the remaining hours of the night for the conveyance. In the early dawn of the next day we wrapped the body in a blanket and conveyed it in an old farm wagon to Padlock Cove, and there buried it under the tall pine, the same one by which we had bound ourselves in bonds of brotherhood by a sacred and binding obligation. While we filled the grave and made the mound Irene sat with bowed head in her mother's lap and sobbed.

Now that the soul of Sartain Hop had sought its Maker, we were without a leader, and pushed our way homeward. Up to this time I had kept everything from mother, but now I felt that I must go home and make a full confession, which I did. It grieved her much, that we, so young, should undertake so hazardous an expedition without the advice of some older head. She further said that as soon as these ruffians on the mountainside would learn of our attempt to kill them, they in turn would murder all, not sparing the women and children. She thought I should make the attempt again, but to cross the railroad in the daytime

in the presence of the guards under the guise of going south after corn. As there was great danger of a raid from these outlaws at any time, she advised me to secrete myself in the dense woods until preparations could be made for my departure. As the shades of night had driven the day away I crept home through the back way along the winding path. As I neared the house, Aunt Betsy came running out and grabbed me up into her arms, shouting:

"Glory, glory, glory! Marse Wheeler has done kill George Huxly en he gang of folkses."

I was carried on the shoulders of Aunt Betsy into mother's room. She told me of General Wheeler's raid that day. He had caught George Huxly and his men in a drunken, diabolical raid, hanged them and filled their bodies full of bullet holes, and was now rushing north to cut off some Yankee army that was marching toward Nashville. That night we slept soundly, for the band of outlaws that infested that part of the country was no more.

CHAPTER XVII

THE next morning it was reported that George Huxly's body had been buried at the foot of the mountain, where the rains would continuously wash the dirt over his grave and bury the body deeper and deeper. As time passed I was anxious to see and satisfy myself that the reports were true, so, notwithstanding that it was a dense and secluded spot, I bounded across the fields in the direction of the place where it was said that his body lay. My associations with Aunt Betsy, and having listened to her weird stories of the dead coming to life, naturally made me approach the place with fear, and when in sight of the spot I craned my neck and stood on tiptoe, to see,—well, to tell the truth, to see if he was sitting on the grave making preparations for another raid.

There was the mound and all was still except for the rustling of the wind among the leaves, and I even jumped at that. But I managed, however, to climb above the grave and roll a big rock down upon it. It struck the mound with a thump, and it seemed to me that I heard him groan. Then my hair pushed my hat off my head. I was now afraid to turn my back, so I just backed away, for some distance,

and then ran with all my might until I came within sight of a house.

General Wheeler was now recognized by our neighborhood as the greatest living general—even greater than Lee or Jackson.

I could now ride my roan horse and hunt as I used to do. I found some old fishhooks and lines, and caught great strings of bass, and then again I would wade the streams and plunge my spear into the sides of the overgrown fish.

The fields were yielding a bountiful supply, and animal life was thriving, fattening and multiplying. There was no sorrow save the announcement that a battle had been fought somewhere, and some neighbor had been killed, but that was in another State and the people had gotten accustomed and hardened, and were not so sympathetic as when the battles first began and they saw the dead and heard the groans of the wounded.

I took advantage of this satisfactory state of affairs, and told my mother that I had lied to her about my gun, and asked her forgiveness. I asked her to take a stroll with me to the back of the woodlot. When we reached the spot, there was the old log and a bed of rotten leaves. With my fingers I scratched away the leaves and drew out my old gun barrel. "I told you I had thrown it into the pond. There is the old stock; the worms have feasted and fat-

tened on it, though I told you that I had burned it. I want to beg your pardon," said I, and I buried my head in her lap.

I felt her warm hands on my ears, I felt the kiss on my head, and I heard the words, "You are forgiven."

If I were back there I believe I could find the barrel this day.

Wild turkeys were plentiful and occasionally I was able to catch one with my dogs, but I had conceived a plan to bag the whole drove at one time. I built a rail pen, covered it with poles, dug a ditch, and covered it over, excepting the outside end, which was about ten feet from the pen, and the inside end which came out in the middle of the pen. I baited this ditch and went home to await results. Next day when I reached the pen, I found it filled with wild turkeys. I crawled in the ditch and came out in the pen where the turkeys were. They ran over me, beat me with their wings, scratched and tore my clothing off. I shut my eyes and clutched at everything that I could feel; sometimes it was a turkey leg and sometimes a tail. Somehow the turkeys—or myself—kicked a hole in the pen, and when I opened my eyes, I was gripping a bunch of tail feathers, my clothes were in rags, my skin slit, and I was bloody from head to foot, but not a turkey was to be seen, so I went limping home. When I fully recov-

ered from my wounds and bruises, I was obliged to get in our winter's supply of wood and gather and market our corn.

I was then sent to Padlock Cove to settle our debt with Mrs. Rutledge. I traveled the same road that mother and I traveled before. I passed the same little streams on my way down the mountainsides, and saw the same house where the woman lived that directed us to Mrs. Rutledge's, but it was deserted and the doors stood ajar. There was the same pond, but the geese were gone. I was met at the front gate by Mrs. Rutledge. She was bent in form and trouble was written on her brow.

Astonished at her appearance I inquired as to the cause, when she related the events concerning her husband's death from wounds received in battle. This sorrow had been followed by another grievous misfortune. Irene had been stricken with fever, and through long days and nights had tossed upon her couch in pain for which there seemed no relief. In her delirium the poor girl had talked incessantly of Hop and his eleven comrades. Finally, her wasted form, lacking strength to combat the Destroyer, passed from the family circle to her final reward.

I offered my sympathy to the sorrowing mother, and began my journey home. On the way I saw her grave alongside of Hop's under

the tall pine. While I stood there I heard an aeolian harp among the branches of the tall pines. Once more repeating the serious and binding obligation I had taken from her lips in this same spot, I turned and bade farewell to Padlock Cove.

Along in the month of November the wintry winds began to blow; frost had fallen, the persimmons had ripened, and the 'possums were fat. One night I started down to Uncle Huse's cabin to invite him to go a coon hunting.

"Fine night," said I. "I was up on Gum Creek to-day and saw lots of tracks; the wind is right and we can bag more than we can carry home to-night."

The old man arose, walked out into the yard, looked at the stars, and said, "Good night for hants; de stars not pintin' right."

"Now look here, Uncle Huse," I exclaimed, "I know I have been a little uppish in running away when the dogs tree, and shaking the 'possum out and have his tail in the split by the time you get there, but I am not going to do it any more. Now get your hat and let's be off."

"Dat's jus' what you been doin', an' I don't see de good ob goin' 'possum huntin' if you can't be at de kotchin'," commented Uncle Huse.

A stray dog had come to our house that day, and he had marks of a thoroughbred, so I was

more than anxious to try him out. For this reason I urged the old man more than I would have under different circumstances. I said again, "Get your hat, and be sure and bring your ax, for we are going to need it."

"Don't I tell you," the old man persisted, "dat one blow his breafe in yo' face!"

A warm breeze had just fanned our face. "Never mind the wind," I replied, "it's a slick-tailed 'possum or a ring-tailed coon that we are after." And I whistled up the dogs.

We were soon on our way to the post-oak ridges, three miles away. As we skirted the lowlands a Jack-o'-lantern arose and moved in front of us, keeping exactly in our direction. This was taken by the old man as a bad omen, for usually this moved to the lower bottoms. Farther up, the warm waves came thick and fast. I had heard often, from the lips of Aunt Betsy, that these warm breezes were actually the spirits of the dead moving around. I had also been told that there were both good and bad spirits permitted to travel the country, and up to this time I did not much fear them, but still I preferred to travel when they were not out. We had gone some distance without a word being spoken, and I knew something was troubling Uncle Huse. Finally he said:

"I believe dese hants belongs to George Huxly and his band."

At these words my blood congealed, and I felt a cold chill go up my back. I believed in the spirits and that they knew every thought of mine. Should they be George Huxly and his men they would do me bodily harm, and my fear increased to such an extent that I was at the point of turning back, when there came the bark of the stray dog half a mile away, as if he were baying at the moon. This strange sound added to my fear, and it was only my pride that kept me from running back home.

I had been taught that it was dishonest and cowardly to run away when the dogs had treed. I had always gone, sometimes under great difficulties, and I was going this time if I did have to fight the spirits of George Huxly and his twelve men.

It was a strange bark, and seemed to indicate sorrow. I would have rejoiced had the dog come to me and showed a willingness to go home. Uncle Huse had not spoken a word, and if he had not been trained as I was, he would have turned back, but both of us being imbued with the spirit of faithfulness to our dogs we pressed on.

Then we came to a spreading oak in a dense thicket in a lonely spot far away from any house; the thick woods made it intensely black. The dog had stopped barking, but he could not be far away. We called, and then we heard

him wag his tail against the dry leaves. We called again, and slowly he came from under the tall oak. He came close to us, licked my hand, and turned back. We waited patiently, trying to decide what to do. Then called again, and tried to get the dog off, but he would not budge an inch, but just whimpered and wagged his tail, and told us as plainly as a dog could that he wanted us to come to him. We beat our way the best we could by crawling on our hands and knees until we got to the very trunk of the big oak, and here lay the dog, but not a thing else could be seen on the ground. Fear and the difficulty of reaching the spot caused us to stick closely together, and it seemed by instinct we arose to look through the branches of the tree, and just then Uncle Huse's head struck something which gave an odd sound. Looking up, we discovered the feet and legs of a dead man.

One wail from Uncle Huse and he jumped through the thicket and soon was lost to sight. I ran with all my might, I knew not where. My desire was only to get away and find Uncle Huse, but fortunately I was running in the direction of home. Three long days passed before Uncle Huse was found. He seemed bereft of his senses, but when we got him home it developed that he was suffering from brain fever, and in spite of all the care we could lav-

ish upon him, the spirit of the old negro took its flight. On the following day we interred our old friend's remains in the white people's burying ground.

The dead body we had found was that of a stranger, and it was buried beneath the tree. A few years after this the skeleton of a dog was found lying across the mound, and it must have died of grief. I never went in sight of that tree for many years after.

The war was still raging. There were battles being fought south of us, but as these battles were in another State I knew not the result until Grapevine Monke came home and told of the battle at Franklin on the last day of November. He said that General Hood had won a great victory, and was now marching on to take Nashville. He told mother that he was bearing a special message to General Hood which was good news for the South, but that he had a sad message for our friends and neighbors, and that was that all but two men under Captain Ikard had fallen at the battle of Franklin, and these two were brother Pell and Stewart Monke.

One that fell at this battle needs particular mention, and that was Jake Sowder. His body, said Monke, was lying across the bodies of three Union soldiers. He had died with a smile on his face, and in his hand was found a

paper on which he had scribbled these words: "Tell mother I died happy."

The year 1864 was drawing to a close. Many sad changes had taken place, but one custom we felt it imperative to continue, and that was the Christmas dinner. It was a gloomy day; the clouds hung low, and while it was not raining, drops formed from the moist air on the twigs like big tears. It was one of those days when nature seems to weep with human beings. Not many had attended the dinner, and those who had come were unable to shake off the depression that the absence of those who would never return had caused. The scanty meal had been finished, and as they looked down the broad lawn that led to the big road, there a lone man was seen to turn out of the road and come toward the house. He wore an old and tattered gray uniform; his coat sleeves were split and tattered about his elbows; his trousers were frayed out almost to his knees, and he was barefooted; through his crownless hat his hair protruded, but, soldier-like, he still carried his gun. As he neared the house with firm step mother sprang forward and through her sobs I heard her say, "It's Pell."

And so it was! This unexpected and welcome arrival seemed to act like magic in changing the spirit of the occasion. Joy now reigned

among the hearts that had been so depressed, and after the first greetings were over we all pressed Pell for news from the front, being anxious to hear at first hand how the fortunes of the South were coming on. Mother, however, would not permit her boy to talk until he had partaken of the best the rather scanty larder afforded. These conditions fulfilled, we were all ready to listen.

He told us of the battle at Nashville on the 15th of December. Hood had been defeated and was retreating south again, and he had come by to get some clothes and could only stay the balance of that day. This was a great disappointment to mother, but she bravely set about her task, and with Betsy's help an old suit of clothes was put in shape for him, and before the sun rose the next morning Pell was on his way to catch up with his command.

At the going down of the sun of the last day of the year 1864 Grapevine Monke came home and went to bed, broken in health, and with a crushed and broken heart. Early in the new year of 1865 I had planned to join the Confederate cavalry. One night, as mother and I sat by the fire, planning as to who would make the next crop while I would be riding my U. S. horse under some Confederate general, the back door opened and there stood Uncle Bill, our negro overseer. He gave a detailed ac-

count of his wanderings from the day he left with the wagon and team, telling what became of each one, even the last span, which was taken by Sherman on his march to the sea. Then he related the trials and troubles of his foot-sore march home—a distance of more than three hundred miles.

Mother told him of the wasted fields, of her trials and troubles, and the marriage and death of Uncle Huse. And that grown-up man, with coal-black skin and gray beard and hair, cried like a child. The following morning he began the task of again building up the farm.

Two months later Pell returned home on parole, and a few days after his arrival came a letter from Lieutenant Tarrant, saying he had captured his brother Bob, and would soon start home. He said he would send after Uncle Huse and Aunt Betsy, and that Pell must visit him and have a big family reunion.

As the days and weeks went by Grapevine Monke grew weaker and weaker. I sat by his bedside late one afternoon watching and waiting for the end that seemed but a few minutes away, when he turned to me and said:

"I will now tell you the story of my mountain home. The blue southern sky was the roof, the mountain the walls, the valley was the floor; my arms and my legs were the vines, and my brain was the electricity that gathered

information, both inside and outside the enemy's lines, for the Confederate cause."

Just then the door opened and a tall Confederate soldier entered, and with outstretched arms he raised the feeble body and planted a kiss on the forehead. It was his son Stewart just in time to speak to his father for the last time. The old man with difficulty raised himself, and grasping his boy's hand, said to him:

"My son, when the South called for strong men, you and I answered the call. We have borne the Flag to the very end. Meet me, son, inside of heaven's golden wall."

Sinking back, he closed his eyes, and his spirit took its flight. Lee had surrendered, and the war was at an end. Why should Milton wish to live?

And Aunt Betsy? When freedom came, all she asked was to stay with Ol' Miss and exercise the freedom she had always enjoyed—freedom to minister to those who loved and trusted her and whom she cherished above all else on earth. Know this, my reader: soon the loyal South will erect a fitting monument to the dear old black mammies, to the kindly souls who loved and nursed us the glad days and the sad days of the dear "Old South."

Happy are we who have memories of cuddling down in dusky arms, arms strong and tender, arms that knew no weariness if we were

ill, but willingly, gladly held us through hours of pain or sobbing childish hurts.

"MAMMY"*

"In the place where they make all the drowsy things,
Like sleep and dreams and the rest,
It is said that the drowiest thing that is made
Is a Mammy's deep dark breast.

"It is deep so that life shall have one hiding-place
Where its fret and its noises shall cease;
And dark, that the light of the garish day
May have its one shadow of peace.

"And the angels who come down to watch over sleep
Look first for these sheltering nests,
And give the most beautiful dreams that they bring
To the babes on the darkest breasts."

* This little poem was written by Miss Howard Weeden, author of "Songs of the Old South" and "Bandana Ballads." I simply added it to Mr. Kennerly's story—a loving tribute to Aunt Betsy and all other dear old black mammies.—MISS DOUGLAS BOMAR.



